REDISCOVERING CHESTER

Remembering the Past, Planning for the Future

A Master Plan for Chester Village Center

August 2017

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The Chester Village Center Master Plan generated a wealth of valuable information. While the sum and substance of this information is contained within the plan document, supportive appendices have been prepared with original materials.

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Appendix B: Market and Sector Analysis
Appendix C: Survey Summary
Appendix D: Focus Group Results

Maps and Figures

The Chester Village Center Master Plan has a lot of maps and illustrations. To help make the inclusion of these graphic products into this document as convenient and functional as possible, they are referenced as figure numbers within the narrative. Figures referenced within each chapter are provided at the end of each chapter.

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Chapter Seven

Implementation Matrix

Figure 21. Key Initiatives

Acknowledgements

All plans are the result of a collective effort. In the development of the Chester Village Center Master Plan many individuals provided considerable input and expertise to the outcome. The project team would like to thank them for their tremendous assistance.

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A Vision for Chester Village Center

A PROCESS OF REDISCOVERY

As described in this plan, the Chester Village Center is a truly special place. Blessed with a wonderfully intact and vibrant historic district, numerous and diverse local businesses, rich and lively arts, and a location central to the broader region, the Town has a lot to work with.

This Master Plan document summarizes the important ideas and thoughts that emerged through this year-long public process. These ideas and thoughts coalesced around seven important themes for which specific vision statements have been crafted:

The Arts

Celebrate the arts, architecture, and culture as integral facets of community life that are present and visible throughout Chester Village Center.

Business and Tourism

Support businesses that cater to a diverse market through policies which build consensus and which strengthens community efforts to enhance the overall experience within the Chester Village Center. These policies should improve both the economic viability and visibility of local businesses.

Historic Resources and Character

Preserve, protect, and enhance the exceptional historic resources and rich character of the Chester Village Center—recognizing its history and culture as defining elements of the community's identity.

Land Use and Design

Land Use and Community Design should reflect the unique qualities found within the Chester Village Center incorporating continuity and connectivity.

Project Goals

At the onset of this process, one thing was very clear: the vision for Chester Village Center's future would not be about changing it, but rather rediscovering it.

Remembering what has shaped Chester and positioning it for the future were the primary goals for the project.

The Chester Village Center Master Plan places a high emphasis on building upon what works, fixing what needs to be fixed and assuring the results enrich the lives of residents and those who visit. The plan helps communicate these ideas and supports the town as it seeks outside resources to realize its vision.

Recreation

Maintain, expand, and connect recreational opportunities within and from Chester Village Center, thereby improving the quality of life.

Transportation and Mobility

Provide safe and convenient travel through the Chester Village Center for all modes of travel, for the enhancement of the community's objectives.

Wayfinding/Gateways

Create signage of appropriate design in the Village Center that communicates the identity of Chester while welcoming both locals and visitors and enhance their understanding and experience of the community.

MOVING FORWARD

In combination, the vision expressed through these statements reflects the ardent desire of Chester to build upon the considerable resources that exist within the Village Center, and elevate the experience for locals and visitors alike. It is a vision that can only be realized through a combination of physical changes and efforts to encourage greater collaboration, communication, and consensus, which are essential to success.

As a Master Plan, this effort is to help the Village Center evolve and thrive in ways that are appropriate. The concepts and approaches discussed will need more thoughtful input from residents to be truly successful. Many of the ideas explored are modest in scope, reflecting the underlying quality of the community's assets. Some of them have been identified as "Key Initiatives" that are important priorities to advance the vision.

Image courtesy of Chester Economic Development Committee

KEY OBJECTIVES

In developing this vision, the community established seven important objectives:

1. ***Bringing People to Main Street***

   Recognizing that Main Street is a focus—work to celebrate its historic resources, enhance business activity and improve mobility for all types of users.

2. ***Connecting Depot Street to Main Street***

   Link the north and south parts of the Village Center along Depot Street to help unify the village, connect businesses together, and enhance the value of the Chester Depot as a community asset.

3. ***Enlivening Town Hall***

   Make the area in and around Town Hall a more inviting location to improve its role as a gateway to visitors and more functional as a civic gathering space.

4. ***Connecting to the River***

   Work to create more public spaces near the Williams River and promote its connection with the Village Center.

5. ***Supporting Business Activity on Common Street***

   Helping the businesses along Common Street and the Green thrive has benefits for the many locals who frequent the area, as well as improve the experience for visitors.

6. ***Expressing Community Identity through Signage and Wayfinding***

   Establishing a consistent visual identity in signage throughout the Village Center can help improve the awareness of businesses, historic resources, and community spaces, and create a more recognizable identity.

7. ***Supporting Good Outcomes***

   Making sure the community uses the efforts begun during this process to more fully explore the vision, coordinate efforts, improve its position to gain outside financial support, and continue to seek community support.

KEY INITIATIVES

From the Key Objectives, the community established many initiatives. Some are specific physical changes and others relate to continued planning and collaboration. An Implementation Matrix was developed that summarizes these initiatives, and is included as part of Chapter Seven.

From this larger grouping, the community chose six "Key Initiatives" that most readily advance the vision and help position the community as it moves forward. Some of these are underway already, while others are recognized in the plan as important priorities.

These initiatives are:

1. ***Main Street Promenade, Brookside Trail, and Central School Improvements***
   - *Widen sidewalk in front of Brookside Cemetery to create a gathering space for community use*
   - *Create an in-town walking trail behind the Brookside Cemetery with a bridge access over the river*
   - *Continue improvements to the Central School/ Academy Building with a goal of opening the building to the public as a museum/ information/art display space*

2. ***Create Parklets (e.g., School Street, encouraging river access, create gathering spaces for better connections)***
   - *Create small parklet areas around town to be used as gathering spaces with river access*
   - *Areas under consideration include: end of School Street, Brookside Cemetery, near Gristmill on Route 103, Kingsbury Road, and on Route 11 West*

3. ***Signage and Wayfinding Development***
   - *A Wayfinding Master Plan is scheduled to be developed in 2017/18 to guide the placement of signs, both directional and informational*
   - *The Town has contracted a local architect to design the signage prototypes*

4. ***Depot Street Improvements***
   - *The sidewalk would be widened with the addition of a green strip and curbing*
   - *Installation of pedestrian-scale lighting would be installed in the green strip*
   - *Improved wayfinding communication at the infamous "Triangle"*
   - *Complete gaps in the existing sidewalk from the beginning of Depot Street all the way to Town Hall*

5. ***Zoning Audit to Guide Town Planning***
   - *A review of the town's zoning foundation will be reviewed in comparison to the Town's future goals and modern-day practices*
   - *Further educational opportunities will be provided to town boards*
   - *Pending the zoning audit, a thorough re-writing of the Town's zoning bylaws will occur*

6. ***Improve Green Area at Town Hall, Improve Connections with the Train Depot***
   - *This piggybacks onto the Depot Street sidewalk initiative to provide better walkability*
   - *The "Triangle" in front of Town Hall will be enhanced to include improved parking and an enhanced green space*
   - *Informational signage related to Chester's village will be installed*
   - *Communication will take place with the Vermont Rail to provide the tourist trains with an enhanced passenger experience, which will benefit both the rail and the Town of Chester*

Chapter One: Purpose of the Plan

INTRODUCTION

In 2015 several local groups and community conversations in the Town of Chester, Vermont began to coalesce into a strong community desire to pursue village revitalization. While each group had a similar outcome in mind—a sustainable, vibrant Village Center—they each had different ideas about how to achieve that end. As a result, the Town decided to undertake a Master Plan to help guide the way to village revitalization in Chester.

In early 2016 the Town applied for and received a Stronger, Communities, Better Connections Grant funded in partnership by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD). The professional services of SE Group of Burlington, Vermont were retained to develop this Chester Village Center Master Plan (Master Plan). VHB, Inc. and ConsultEcon, Inc. acted as sub-consultants on the project for transportation planning and economic development support.

Why Establish a Master Plan?

A Master Plan is an advisory document that establishes broad goals shared within a community. They typically also identify specific strategies and policies to support the broader goals, as is the case in this document. Master plans are valuable because they help establish and record consensus about the future direction of the community. They also help set communities on the path that will achieve their ultimate goals. Without an unclouded vision and a deliberate plan for the future, communities can end up falling short of their aspirations. Master plans help communities stay on track to discover, or rediscover, their full potential.

The SCBC Grant Program

The Strong Communities, Better Connections Program is a multiagency partnership to align state and local investments to increase transportation options, build resilience and economic vitality in Vermont's community centers. The SCBC Program is an annual grant program administered by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) in partnership with the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD). This project was awarded in the Second year of the SCBC program.

The Purpose of this Master Plan

The overall goal of this Master Plan project is to engage the community in a planning process that gathers the various thoughts and desires of residents, creates a unified vision for village revitalization, and establishes a clear implementation plan to further this vision. Implementable transportation, land use, and community design-related projects and strategies have been identified that can help guide Chester into making smart investments to further their vision. Recommendations for enhancing community capacity and identity are also provided to support the decision-making process.

Structure of the Master Plan

This document is organized around seven chapters. Chapter One highlights the purpose of this plan. Chapter Two outlines the background (foundation) materials collected and reviewed in the development of this plan. Chapter Three describes the public input conducted over the course of the project that informed the effort. Chapter Four highlights the key opportunities that arose from the foundations analysis and public input process. Chapter Five explains the underpinnings and framework for the overall vision, which is then described in more detail in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven concludes the work by examining specific implementation measures and approaches to help realize the vision.

How to Use this Master Plan

As a guide for the future, this document is meant to be read and used in a variety of ways. First and foremost, it is a tool for decision makers to gauge their choices about future development in the Village Center. The Town has postponed continued work on its revised Town Plan so findings from this process may be incorporated into its direction. Changes to the Unified Development Bylaws may occur over time to meet the goals, policies and objectives of the Master Plan. Beyond the vision and polices, the Master Plan also includes implementation priorities and actions. These may serve Town staff, public officials and others in setting the course of action for the years ahead. The Master Plan should also inform the Town's Capital Improvement Planning (CIP) and make the community more competitive for future grant opportunities.

The Master Plan is also meant to be embraced by and accessible to the broader Chester community. As discussed throughout this document, public input was vital to this master planning process and the ideas expressed are directly reflected in the ideas, policy language, and graphics of the Master Plan. Whether it is residents seeking to organize a new event or VTrans working on a new highway project in the Village Center, the Master Plan should be their first reference to understand the overall values and outcomes that the community desires.

As a master plan-level document, this Master Plan provides a broad view of physical improvements and non-physical community recommendations in the Village Center. It does not identify any specific designs for any of the physical projects. Instead, it identifies the scope, direction, and intent of future projects. This Master Plan is meant to be a reference guide that organizes desired physical improvements and community recommendations for the enhancement of the Village Center. It is intended to be a useful tool for the Town and its organizational partners to realize the overall vision for the Village Center. However, it is important to note that additional planning, design, and partnerships may be required prior to the implementation of many of the projects contained within. The future location of facilities will need to be determined through collaborative planning processes and partnerships, and vetted through public and agency processes.

Image courtesy of Town of Chester

Chapter Two: Establishing a Foundation

PLAN CONTEXT

An integral first step in establishing a foundation for a Master Plan is explaining the plan context, which includes the community setting, study area definition, and previous and ongoing planning efforts.

Community Setting

Chester is a small New England town located in Windsor County in southern Vermont near the confluence of several branches of the Williams River. The Town has a population of approximately 3,150 residents and is near several ski areas including Okemo Mountain Resort, Stratton Mountain Resort, and Killington Resort. Chester is an important residential and retail node regionally, offering a community of great restaurants, comfortable B&Bs, and interesting shops, including authentic antique stores and lovely art galleries. It is neighbored by Ludlow, Baltimore, Springfield, Rockingham, Grafton, Windham, and Andover and shares regional relationships with these communities. The Town of Chester includes three distinct villages: South Village (encompassing Main Street and the Green), Chester Depot, and North Village (more commonly referred to as the Stone Village) (see **Figure 1**).

Study Area

The study area for the project primarily encompasses the Village Center planning area, as designated by the Town of Chester and ACCD. The Vermont village center designation program supports local revitalization efforts such as the current planning process by providing technical assistance and state funding to help designated municipalities build strong communities. As a designated Village Center, the area is eligible for tax credits, priority consideration for state grants, priority consideration by State Building and General Services (BGS), and Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) Eligibility.

The designated Village Center area extends along Main and Depot Streets and encompasses the South Village and Chester Depot areas (see **Figure 2**). While not completely coterminous, the study area includes most of the Chester Village Historic District. Relationships and connections with areas outside of the study area are considered in this document; however, the focus on this effort is directed at the officially designated Village Center. This boundary, in context to other relevant features, is shown on **Figure 2**.

Planning History

The Town of Chester has regularly updated its Town Plan In accordance with 24 V.S.A., Chapter 117 (the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act). The most recent update was first adopted by the Chester Select Board on July 21, 2010. As with many municipal plans in Vermont, "the purpose of the Chester Town Plan is to guide future growth and development of land, public services and facilities, and to protect the environment in the best interest of the citizens of Chester." While the community recognized a need to develop a revised Town Plan in 2015, the existing plan was readopted in July of 2015 so findings from this document may be incorporated into its direction.

Aside from the municipal plan, community planning in Chester is generally accomplished through partnerships with the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission, ACCD, VTrans, and other regional and state entities.

Additionally, many groups such as the Chester Economic Development Committee, Open Space Committee, and the Townscape Committee have certainly focused on thinking for the future, but the community has not taken on a plan such as this in the past.

LAND USE

Land use involves the management and modification of the natural environment into the built environment such as homes, communities, settlements, and semi-natural habitats such as arable fields, pastures, and managed woods.

Overview

Land use patterns in the Town of Chester follow the traditional form of historic New England communities, with denser development in the village center, and low or moderate density residential areas outside the village center that is primarily rural in nature. Chester includes three locally distinct areas: Main Street and the Green (in the study area), the Depot Area (in the study area), and the Stone Village, which lies outside the study area. The Village Center features a mixture of relatively high-density residential, commercial, industrial, and public uses, with services such as a post office, health care, the elementary school, and municipal offices. Commercial development in the Town has historically been located in the Village Center, as it is served by municipal water and sewer service, while outlying areas are served by private wells and on-site septic systems.

The multi-node organization pattern in Chester disperses commercial activity, with the bulk of retail, lodging and dining in the Main Street/Green area and more artisan and studio spaces in the Depot area. This helps make the core more accessible and convenient to those living or staying in the Village. The municipal core is generally centered on the Depot and Town Offices.

Land Use Direction in the Town Plan

Land use direction in the most recent Chester Town Plan makes it clear that the community cherishes the historic village area of the Town, and suggests that future growth should not diminish the historical character or vitality of the Village Center. The intention of the land use direction in the Town Plan is to continue the long tradition of Vermont's village centers—encouraging the most intensive development (commercial, industrial and higher-density residential) to occur in and around the village area, while reserving the outlying areas for slower growth with relatively lower-intensity and lower-density uses.

According to the Town Plan, development in the Village Center should be the highest density in the Town, and should facilitate the creation of a circulation system that accommodates pedestrians and other non-motorized travel. New development should not detract from the historic character and aesthetic qualities of the Village Center. Affordable housing, assisted living facilities, and multi-family residential are encouraged in this area, and discouraged in rural areas that are far from services available in the Village Center.

Commercial development is encouraged to occur in the Village Center because of the availability of Town water and sewage, and to maintain the traditional development pattern. Commercial development in mixed-use areas should be surrounded and interspersed with high density residential, public and light industrial uses (Chester Planning Commission 2009).

Zoning and Land Development Regulations

Zoning in the Village Center Area (as defined in this plan and depicted on **Figure 3**) is primarily comprised of the Village Center and Stone Village Districts, with very small portions of the project area extending into the Residential/Commercial and Commercial/Industrial Districts. While only a small portion of the project area is within these later districts, these commercial districts, as well as the Residential 40,000 (R40) District are important adjacent uses to consider in the Village Center Master Plan (Town of Chester 2007).

Built Forms

The Chester Village Historic District is noted on the National Register of Historic Places as one of the best preserved historic villagescapes in the state of Vermont. The architecture of the Town of Chester reflects the traditional built environment commonly found in the villages of Vermont. The architectural styles represented include the Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate Revival, Gothic Revival, Queen Anne/Eastlake, Colonial Revival, and Georgian Revival, both high style and vernacular. "Snecked ashlar" stone construction is also predominate in the stone village with a few examples in the Chester Village Historic District. Detached-houses predominate among the building types with commercial, religious, educational, and agricultural buildings present in limited numbers.

CIRCULATION AND MOBILITY

Primary Roadway Analysis

Primary roadways in the Village Center area include VT 11 (Main Street) – a Rural, Minor Arterial; VT 103/VT 11 (S. Main Street) – a Rural, Principal Arterial; and VT 103 (Maple/Depot Street) – a Rural, Principal Arterial. The major road network and traffic volumes are shown on **Figure 4**.

With three State Highways traversing the Town and the community's central location on the direct route to Okemo Mountain Resort and other regional destinations, the Village Center experiences significant through-traffic for such a small community. Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) for VT 11 West of Depot Street was 5,200 vehicles per day in 2015; VT 103/VT 11 East of Maple Street experienced 8,900 vehicles per day; VT 103 between Maple Street and Depot Street experienced 3,500 vehicles per day; and VT 103 North of Maple Street experienced 4,200 vehicles per day (Vermont Agency of Transportation 2016). This through-traffic presents both an opportunity and a challenge for the community. Enticing tourists and through-travelers to stop and spend more time in Chester may help spur increased economic activity in the Village, while truck and other heavy traffic can create delays, and may make bicyclists and pedestrians feel unsafe.

Peak traffic congestion in the Village typically occurs in the afternoon during the ski season when operations at Okemo Mountain Resort are in full swing. During this time, VT 103/Depot Street has a recorded Level of Service (LOS) of "D" for the eastbound approach along Depot Street (D = approaching unstable flow; speeds slightly decrease as traffic volume slightly increase). VT 11/VT 35/Depot Street has a recorded LOS of "E" for the northbound approach along VT 35 (E = unstable flow, operating at capacity). Flow becomes irregular and speed varies rapidly because there are virtually no usable gaps to maneuver in the traffic stream and speeds rarely reach the posted limit). VT 103/VT 11 West has a recorded LOS of "F" for the Southbound approach along VT 103 (F = forced or breakdown flow. Every vehicle moves in lockstep with the vehicle in front of it, with frequent slowing required) (RSG Inc. 2009).

VTrans identifies High Crash Location (HCL) sections and intersections throughout the State by determining if the given location experienced five or more crashes within a five-year period, and by comparing the *Actual Crash Rate* of total crashes reported to the State with a calculated *Critical Crash Rate*. When the *Actual Crash Rate* exceeds the *Critical Crash Rate*, the intersection or section of roadway is considered an HCL. There are no identified HCL intersections identified in the study area, although there are two HCL sections in the Village Center. These include VT 11 from Depot Street to North of VT 11/VT 103 (MM 5.077–5.377) and VT 103 from South of Maple Street to South of First Ave (MM 2.847–3.147) (VTrans 2015).

A review of the location and clustering of reported crashes within the study area within the last five years (2012–2016) shows the highest density of reported crashes occurring along the section of Main Street between Depot Street and Maple Street (including the intersections with Maple and Depot Streets). Within this timeframe, there were no reported crashes involving pedestrians and only one reported crash involving a bicyclist (located on Main Street immediately east of Depot Street).

Given the numerous and often wide curb cuts along this segment of Main Street and the relatively high volume of turning vehicles at Depot and Maple Streets, it is not surprising to see this section of Main Street with the highest rate of crashes in the study area. Opportunities to calm traffic through streetscape enhancements and other measures, better manage driveway access points, and enhance wayfinding should contribute to a reduction in both the rate and severity of crashes in the village.

Class I Town Highways

All of the State Highways within the Village Center are classified as Class 1 Town Highways (C1TH). This classification establishes local control of the roadway within village centers, particularly for maintenance. This classification also supports greater autonomy for design control and flexibility in support of speed limits, crosswalks and surfaces, wayfinding, travel land and shoulder widths, on-street parking, curb extensions and roadside tree planting. Roadways classified as C1TH still must address standards for traffic control devices (*Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*) and VT State Design Standards.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation

Sidewalks

Sidewalks form the backbone of any pedestrian transportation network. While sidewalks exist along key routes through the Village Center, most are "at grade" and not "curb separated" (i.e., they do not provide physical separation from motor vehicles). Curb separated sidewalks, and better yet, sidewalks with a grass strip and a curb between the sidewalk and the travel lane are generally considered more comfortable walking environments. In some cases, like along Depot Street between Main and Maple, the "sidewalk" is simply a lane painted on the edge of the roadway surface. The extent of existing sidewalks by type is shown on **Figure 4**.

In general, sidewalks in the Village Center need repair. Cracks, frost heaves, and deterioration is extensive. There are also opportunities to improve the aesthetic qualities of the sidewalks to make them more attractive places to walk. There are planned improvements for 2,300 feet of sidewalk to be replaced along VT 11, VT 103, and VT 35 through the Village in 2017 (Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission 2014).

Crosswalks

Legal crosswalks exist at all intersections in Vermont, whether marked or not. Crosswalk markings establish a legal crosswalk at areas away from intersections and help improve visibility and safety at intersections. For improved visibility, the preferred crosswalk marking pattern is the high-visibility "continental" crosswalk marking. If placed to avoid the wheel track, these markings may last significantly longer than standard transverse line crosswalks (FHWA 2016).

Marked crosswalks exist at many key intersections and mid-block crossings in the Village Center. Most marked crosswalks in Chester are "continental crosswalks." Notably, there are no marked crosswalks at the intersection of VT 103 and Depot Street, surrounding the Town Hall and at Lisai's Market on Depot Street. These crosswalks are identified on **Figure 4**.

Pedestrian Signage

Most signage and wayfinding in the Village Center is at a "vehicular scale," intended to be view by travelers in motor vehicles traveling at relatively high rates of speed. Pedestrian signage in the Village Center is extremely limited, and where they do exist, are primarily provided by private owners. Some of the existing crosswalks have crossing warning signs associated with them. A warning light is located at the crosswalk adjacent to the elementary school.

Walking and Hiking Trail Network

Official walking and hiking trails are currently limited in the Village Center, but widely available in the surrounding region. The 1.8-mile Green Mountain Nature Trail is located adjacent to Green Mountain Union High School and extends towards the study area and the South Branch of the Williams River. There is also an unmapped trail which is heavily used but not located on any map. This trail is located behind the Pinnacle Recreation area.

The proposed Brookside Trail would extend behind Brookside Cemetery on a 14-acre plot of land with the trailhead located at 230 Main Street. The ultimate design for this trail provide an opportunity for an "overland" connection between Main Street and the Depot Area.

A popular walking route, referred to as "the Loop" by some, consists of Church Street, North Street, Depot Street and Main Street. The Loop totals approximately

3 miles in total length and traverses the entirety of the study area. The location of these existing or planned trail routes is shown on **Figure4**.

Bicycle Facilities

Chester is connected to other communities by beautiful, rural highways with decent shoulders for bicycling and the Village Center is a common stop among recreational road rides. There is also considerable local bicycle use. Although a popular location for bicycling, dedicated bicycle facilities are essentially non-existent in the Village Center.

Bicycle Parking

Both public and private bicycle parking is limited in the Village Center. There are no bike racks at the Town Offices, on the Green, or other key municipal/civic locations except for the visitor kiosk on Main Street. Where bicycle parking is provided by private businesses, it is often not visible (e.g., tucked away behind the buildings) or of low quality.

Image courtesy of Fullerton Inn

PARKING

Parking is provided along many of the primary roadways in the Village Center. There is head in, angled, and parallel parking available depending on the specific location. Many businesses also provide private parking, but this provision of such parking is spotty as much of the Village Center was constructed prior to the automobile era.

In general, parking in the Village Center is adequate for typical days and uses. In some cases, like businesses on the Green, adequate parking may be farther away (across the Green and Main Street) than desired. Parking, and pedestrian circulation from parking, around the Town Offices has been identified as a challenge.

There are no public shared parking environments in the Village Center, which can be important for high traffic weekends and events, such as Chester on the Green. Parking for these events happens at area churches or at the NewsBank facilities. During large snow events, parking along the street can become very limited and challenging.

ARRIVAL, WAYFINDING, AND GATEWAYS

Places like the Village Center attract visitors and guests. How those guests know where to go and the messages that support that information is the role of signage and wayfinding. Information and directions can be clearly communicated in ways that make moving around easy, which then also supports area businesses and attractions. Wayfinding and signage can also provide a benefit for locals by highlighting resources and locations they may not be aware of and increasing civic pride.

As stated in *Your Town: A Destination* by Brooks and Forman, "Real men don't ask for directions." A good signage and wayfinding system can make it so they don't need to! A good system helps connect the people with the places they want to see, visit, and experience.

Current Wayfinding System

The signage and wayfinding system present in Chester today has basically evolved over the years without significant comprehensive planning or design standards. In general, signage and wayfinding is vehicular-oriented and comprised of the standard signs provided by VTrans and the State of Vermont. Some private businesses have also provided unofficial wayfinding signage in some locations to help direct potential customers.

While the visual motifs expressed in the existing signage have some common elements, there is a significant amount of variability; perhaps too much. In addition to significant variability in the design of the signage systems, wayfinding (directional) is often confusing when it is provided. More often, directional information appears to be lacking, particularly directing people to various key nodes within the community like the Green.

Lighting of directional signs is often limited, which make them less effective, particularly in winter months when dark comes early.

Orientation

Most signage in the community is currently oriented towards motor vehicles. When considering pedestrians within the Village Center it will be very important to make sure signs address their perspective. Signs mounted flush on buildings, for example, do not encourage pedestrian movement. Perpendicular signs help improve pedestrian visibility and enliven the streetscape.

Arriving to Chester

There are several gateways or entry points to the Village Center, and an almost equal number of arrival signs. There are standard green state signs at some gateways and municipal signs at others.

Gateways set a tone for arriving visitors and create a physical "sense of arrival." The current welcome signs, however, do not have a real presence to them nor do they establish the look and feel of the overall signage system.

Appearance

The identity and logo use is one of the most confusing elements of the current signage system. Current public and private signs use a range of logos to represent the community and there is not a unified message that refers to the Village. In the case of most state signs, no logo or distinctive elements are included at all. Existing signs also include a wide range of materials and colors, creating a lot of visual "clutter," when a visitor passes them by at 25 to 30 mph.

STREET LIGHTING

Appropriate quality and placement of lighting can enhance an environment as well as increase comfort and safety. Pedestrians often assume that motorists can see them at night; they are deceived by their own ability to see the oncoming headlights. Without sufficient overhead lighting, motorists may not be able to see pedestrians in time to stop.

In commercial areas with nighttime pedestrian activity, like the Village Center, streetlights and building lights can enhance the ambiance of the area and the visibility of pedestrians by motorists (Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center 2017).

Like most signage in the Village Center, street lighting is oriented towards vehicular use, rather than being more pedestrian-oriented. While some of the existing utility-pole mounted fixtures are oriented towards the pedestrian space on Main Street, they do not function as pedestrian lights. Pedestrian-scale lighting is much lower in height (12 to 16 feet) than the standard vehicular street lighting currently found in the Village Center and is spaced closer together (about 60 feet). Existing streetlights within the Village Center are identified on **Figure 4**.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

The identified historic resources within the Village Center help tell a story of the community's growth, culture and character since its inception in 1754.

This story helps shape recommendations for the Village Center that maintain the integrity of historic buildings and landscapes, particularly with respect to spatial organization, community spaces, landscape characteristics, and exterior architectural features. While this story is compelling, it is also not complete—history is not static.

Historical Overview of the Town of Chester

The town was originally chartered in 1754 under the name Flamstead, then quickly renamed New Flamstead in 1761. In 1766 the town settled on its namesake, attributed to Earl of Chester, the eldest son of King George III. From its inception, the Town of Chester quickly grew in population as many southern New England towns began to exhaust their resources and available land, forcing many settlers to look elsewhere. The natural resources, undeveloped forests and unharnessed water power in southern Vermont attracted pioneers and settlers looking to establish themselves and support the next generations.

Chester's growth was probably predicated on its location at the intersection, first of important stagecoach lines, and later railroad lines. Green Mountain Turnpike, the major route from Boston to Montreal still runs through Chester, both under its own name and as a portion of VT 103 (commonly known as Route 103). In addition, the present Main Street was the route from Hanover, NH to Albany, NY.

Bill Cilley – Image courtesy of Chester Historical Society

Three separate villages grew up along these travel ways through Chester: South Village along Main Street, Chester Depot, and Gassetts, named for the stationmaster for the Burlington and Rutland Railroad. The Town expanded rapidly with the first census in 1791 listed it as having a population of 981, but by 1820 the population exceeded 2,400. The Town included four grist mills, nine saw mills, three fulling mills, one oil mill, two woolen factories, five stores, six taverns, one distillery, and four tanneries.

During this period, there was established the Chester Academy in addition to the nineteen school districts with school buildings, the poor farm, and the Congregational, Baptist, and Universalist churches.

Chester did its part in the Civil War. At a meeting in May 1861, it was voted to equip the first volunteers with a $10.00 bounty, a Colt's revolver, and a bowie knife. In 1884 the Town appropriated $2,000.00 to erect the soldier's monument in front of the cemetery on Main Street.

1885 Civil War Monument Dedication – Image courtesy of Chester Historical Society

Unfortunately, one of the side effects of the Civil War and the opening of the West was a drain on the population in the Town. By 1933 the Vermont Year Book lists Chester as having a population of 1,666. Since that time the Town of Chester has modernized its economy and continued to grow (Chester Historical Society 2010; Chester Planning Commission 2009).

Historic Districts

Many communities in Vermont have long and detailed histories and a plethora of historic sites and buildings, the historic resources found in the Village of Chester are a truly unique asset for the community. There are two historic districts listed in the National Historic Register: the Chester Village Historic District and the Stone Village Historic District. The Chester Village Historic District is noted in the National Register of Historic Places as one of the best preserved historic villagescapes in the state. The Stone Village Historic District is also particularly unique, representing the highest concentration of "snecked ashlar" construction in the State of Vermont.

Chester Village Historic District

In 1985 the National Register of Historic Places added Chester Village, the southern portion of the main village, to the National Register.

Situated in the narrow valley of the Williams River's Middle Branch, the Chester Village Historic District corresponds to the village center focused on the Green together with related historic development along the dominant east-west axis of Main Street and seven tributary streets.

When listed, the historic district contained 187 principal buildings, of which only 17 buildings were identified as not contributing to the district's historic character. The architectural styles represented include the Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate Revival, Gothic Revival, Queen Anne/Eastlake, Colonial Revival, and Georgian Revival. Freestanding single-family houses predominate among the building types with commercial, religious, educational, and agricultural buildings present in limited numbers.

Third Hotel at Fullerton Site – Image courtesy of Chester Historical Society

Overwhelmingly of wood-framed construction, the buildings generally share temple form and domestic scale with gable facades oriented toward the street; three examples exist of the "snecked ashlar" construction prevalent in the nearby Stone Village (see Stone Village Historic District, entered in the National Register of Historic Places on May 17, 1974).

Although a few intrusions have appeared in recent decades (along with an increasing quantity of synthetic siding), Chester Village retains to an extraordinary extent the integrity of its nineteenth and early twentieth century architectural environment (National Register of Historic Places 1985). The extents of the historic district relative to the Village Center is highlighted on **Figure 4**.

Stone Village Historic District

In 1974 the National Register of Historic Places added the Stone Village to the National Register. Dating back to the early 1830s, skilled Scottish masons and their descendants built the "snecked ashlar" style buildings which line the north side of Chester Depot village along Route 103. These construction methods and buildings are rare across the U.S. Approximately fifty surviving buildings can be found in the State of Vermont, the highest concentration of which are found within the Stone Village. Some have observed that due to the abundance and proximity of each "snecked ashlar" house, this area more closely resembles an authentic Scottish neighborhood than its Vermont foundation.

North Street School House – Image courtesy of Chester Historical Society

There are eighteen principal buildings in the stone village, oriented linearly along the road. The predominant domestic architectural style may be described as "Greek Revivalized" Cape Cod executed in stone, having high pitch gable roof oriented perpendicularly to the road. Appendages in all cases include a kitchen addition to the rear and usually a barn or garage appended in ell or continuous fashion to the rear of the kitchen. Entrance is provided in an end bay on the ground floor of the front elevation with a secondary access on a side elevation. Greek Revival details usually include fenestration or cornice treatment.

Most buildings are sided in "snecked ashlar," while others are clapboard-sided frame buildings. Some structures in the District also have a Federal-inspired character, especially in fenestration and cornice treatment (National Register of Historic Places 1974).

The Importance of History

The many existing historic structures and outdoor spaces within the Village Center do not simply act as a backdrop. These places and spaces are alive; serving important commercial roles (such as restaurants, retail stores, lodging establishments, and notable local businesses like NewsBank). The churches and civic structures provide space for worship and fellowship. Brookside Cemetery and the Green are integrated into the fabric of the Village and function as important gathering spaces and areas of contemplative refection; community memorials are placed in such areas.

Challenges in preserving historic character are evident. While the Town of Chester has invested in supporting preservation, some historic structures have suffered from disrepair and preserving the integrity of important buildings and outdoor spaces has been difficult.

While the story of Chester as expressed in its historic resources is rich, communicating this story is not complete. The Chester Historical Society is active and runs the local museum on Main Street. But the historic resources along Main Street are not fully inventoried, nor are they detailed in print or electronic documentation. They are not clearly identified to those visiting or passing through. And while the historic resources in Chester are clearly a valued community asset, work to improve the public awareness of these resources and their value to today remains.

ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC BASELINE

An important consideration in any long-range planning process is how current economic and demographic conditions might influence future decision making. The information provided in this section highlights key aspect of economic and demographic trends based on a review of state and federal information. A more detailed assessment of baseline conditions is provided in Appendix A.

Data presented throughout this document represents calculations for the Town of Chester and the Chester Census Designated Place (CDP). While the Chester CDP is not coterminous with the Village Center Designation which demarks the project area for the Master Plan, it represents the best available data for the Village Center for the purposes of this report. The CDP was established in the 2000 U.S. Census and encompasses the urbanized center of the Town of Chester, the Chester Depot, and the village of North Chester.

Regional Context

Chester Village Center is in the Town of Chester in south central Vermont in Windsor County. Chester's local economic conditions are directly tied to the regional economy. It is a relatively large town, compared to other Vermont towns, and it is proximate to Springfield, the population and commercial center of Southern Windsor County. Many of the economic and social phenomena that are facing Chester are facing other Vermont towns in the region and statewide.

The population in the Town of Chester is larger than that of the average Vermont town. Chester's population was estimated to be 3,180 in 2016. Chester had an estimated 810 jobs in 2014. By comparison, Springfield, the largest job center in the region, had a population of 9,260 in 2016 and 4,280 jobs in 2014. The nearby towns of Ludlow and Rockingham have approximately 2,280 and 2,040 jobs, respectively.

Population

With an estimated population of 3,110 residents in 2015, the Town of Chester has experienced a moderate population increase of between 4% and 7% each decade since 1990 (U.S. Census Bureau 2016). The State of Vermont's Populations Projections estimate similar levels of moderate growth.

Age

The age distribution of Town of Chester is depicted in **Chart 1**.

This type of chart is what is typically referred to as "population pyramids" because they generally form the shape of a pyramid when the population is growing (with the largest populations in the youngest age cohorts). Notably, the distribution displayed in **Chart 1** demonstrates an inverted pyramid shape because the region's growth is correlated with in-migration or extended residency rather than through population growth through births.

As demonstrated in the chart, the largest population cohorts being between 50 and 70 years of age, suggesting an aging resident population and that young families with young children are either moving away or not migrating into the area. This is especially evident among the infant and toddler populations, which are very small.

The median age of the CDP and the Town of Chester is 54.1 and 50.5, respectively, compared to a median of 37.2 in the U.S., which also reinforces this interpretation of an aging population.

Income and Poverty

In 2014 the median household income for the Town of Chester was $52,500 and $36,731 in the CDP (U.S. Census Bureau 2016).

Chart 2 shows a simplified distribution of the CDP's households by income bracket, with a comparison to the Town of Chester. The data is for 2014.

Nearly 40% of CDP's households have incomes in excess of $50,000. This compares to 51% for the Town of Chester, indicating that households outside of the CDP are slightly more affluent than those within.

Charts 3 and **4** compare the CDP and the Town of Chester in terms of income by source—the percent of breakdown of all household income from the following sources (2014 data):

- Wage & Salary
- Self-Employment
- Interest/Dividends/Net Real Estate
- Social Security/Retirement Income
- Public Assistance/Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Other

Income sources between the CDP and the Town of Chester displays some of the demographic differences between the two areas. As seen in the charts, the relationship between Social Security/Retirement and Wage/Salary echoes these variances. With a five-year difference in average age, the CDP has an older population identity resulting in varied sources of income. Further evident in the Wage/Salary and Self-Employment percentages, the Town of Chester represents a greater working population than the CDP. Interest, dividends and real estate income is a slightly more important source of income in the CDP than in the Town of Chester.

Approximately 16% of the CDP population had income below the federal poverty level in 2014. In comparison, approximately 10% of both the Town of Chester and Vermont as whole had income below the federal poverty level in 2014 (U.S. Census Bureau 2016). **Chart 5** shows the percentage of various population groups whose income in 2014 was below the federal poverty level. This chart indicates, for each population group, that the CDP has a higher share of its population with income below the poverty level than the Town of Chester.

Image courtesy of Town of Chester

Chart I. Town of Chester Age Distribution

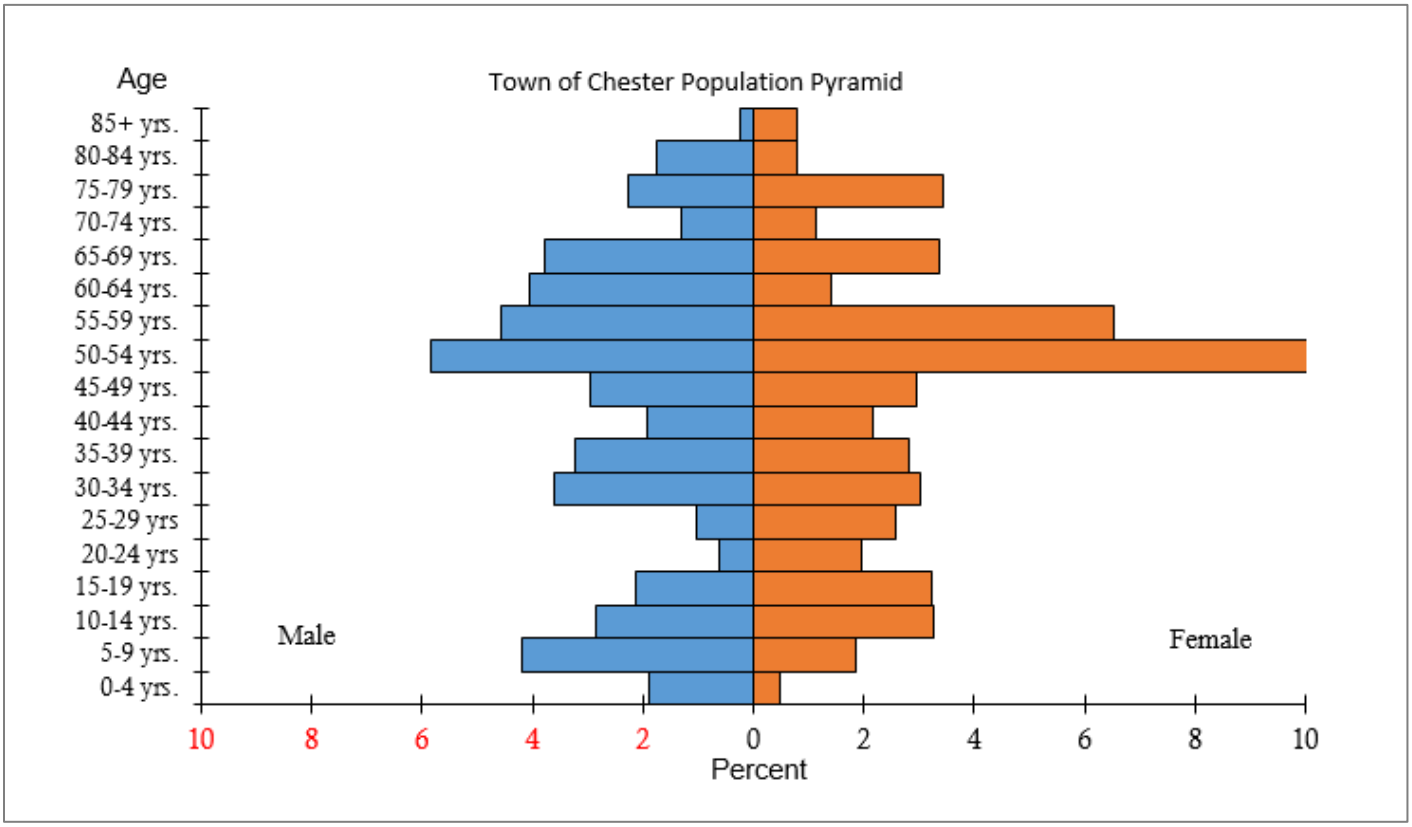


Chart 2. Distribution of Households by Income Bracket

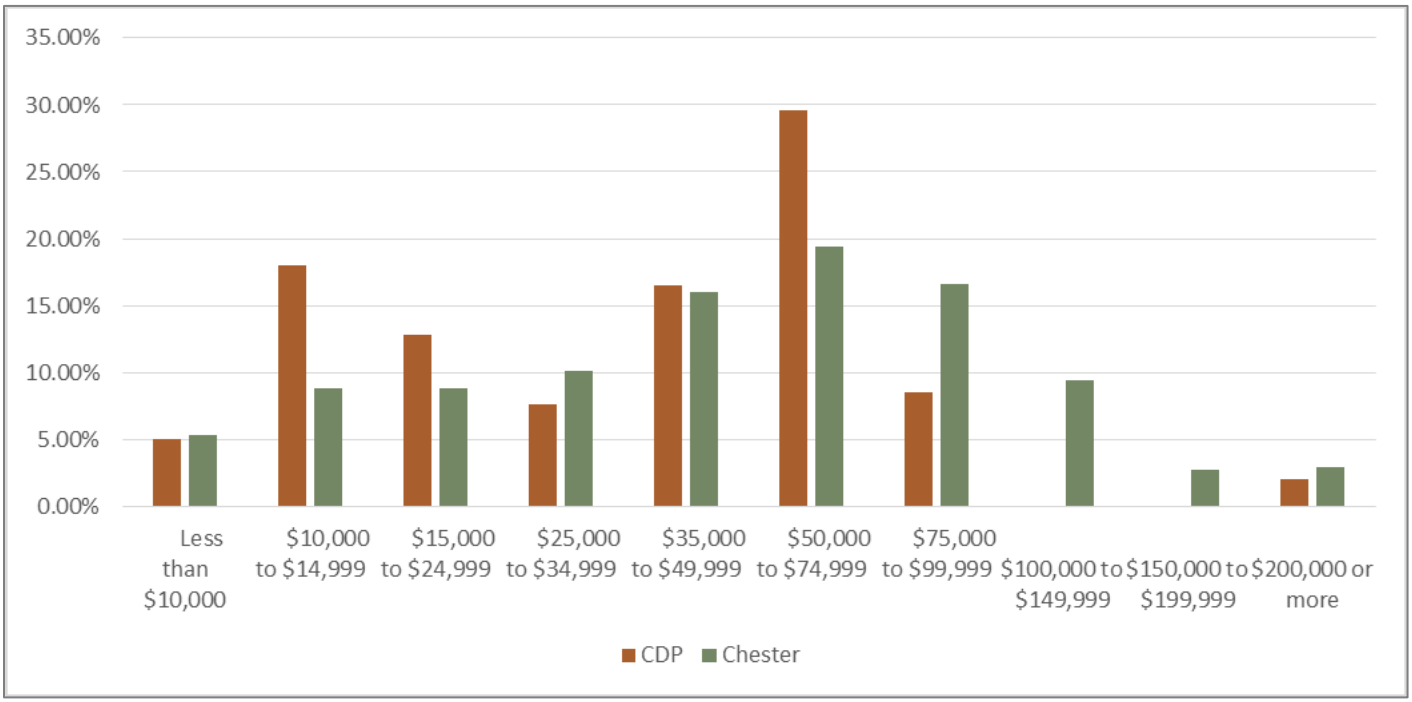


Chart 3. Town of Chester Household Income by Source

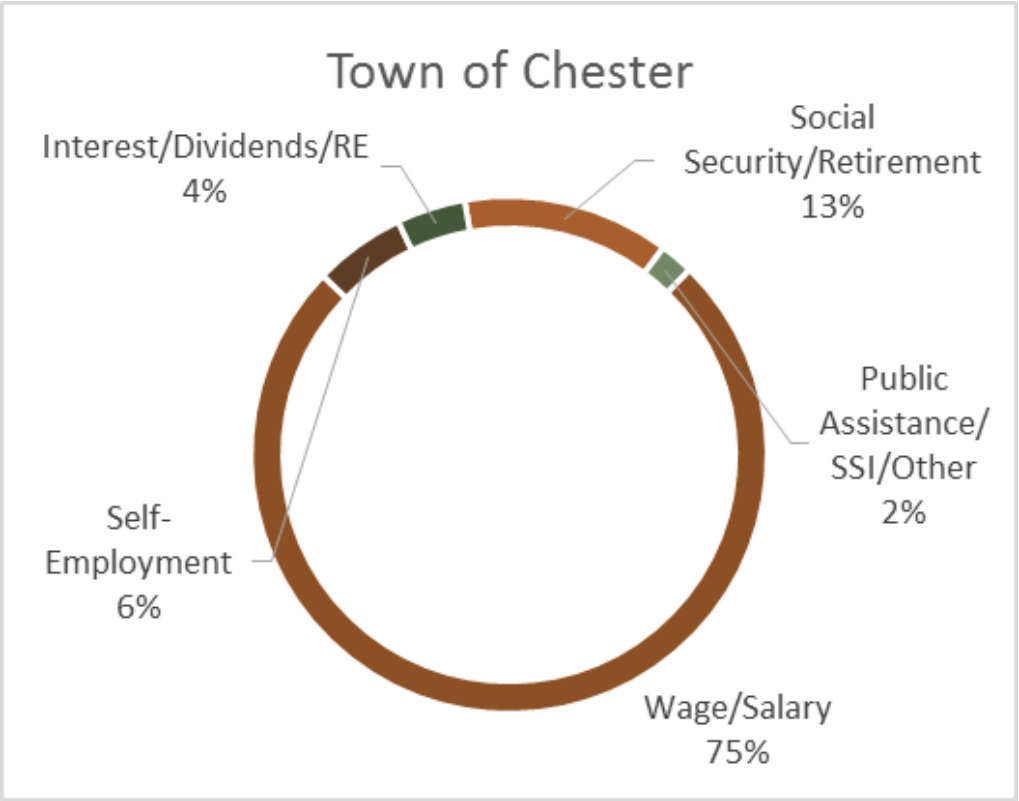


Chart 4. CDP Household Income by Source

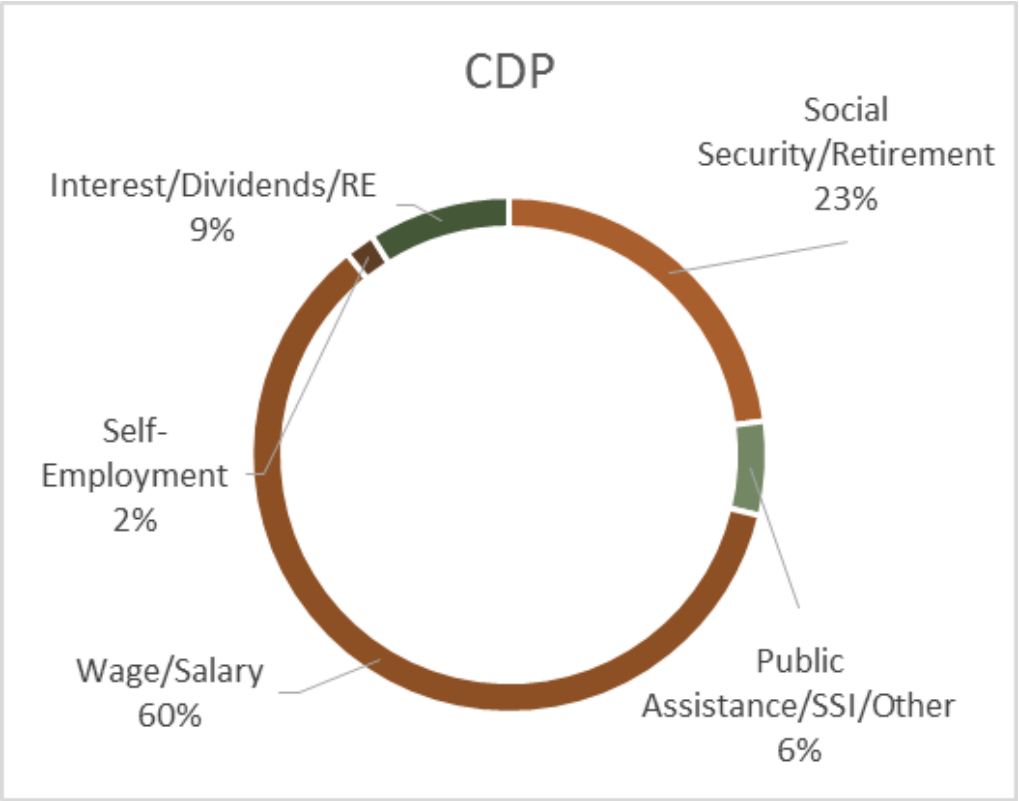
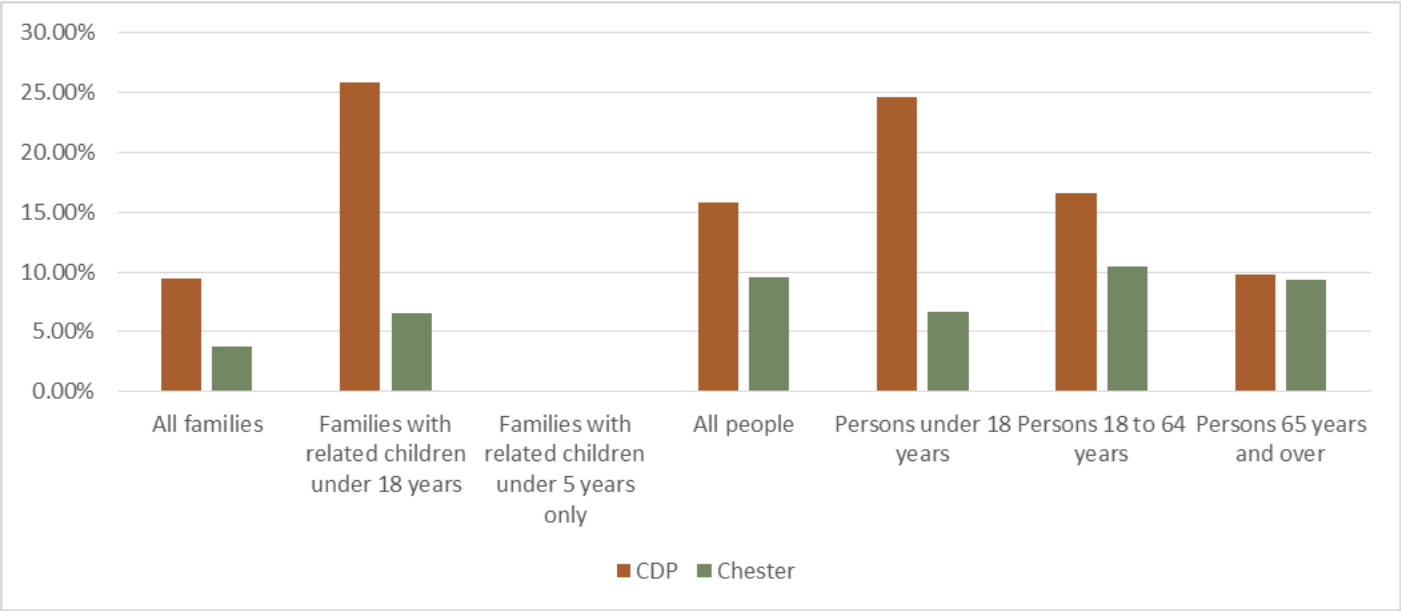


Chart 5. Percent of Population Groups whose income in 2014 was Below the Federal Poverty Level



Business Composition and Activity

There are two primary ways to consider industry composition: through the number of businesses by industry and the distribution of employment by industry. By comparing the two, one can get a sense of economic stability and resiliency by analyzing the share of employment attributed to industries with only a few large employers, such as professional, scientific and technical services, and health care services. **Chart 6** demonstrates the number of Town businesses by industry. The professional, scientific, technical services industry has the largest number of businesses in the Town of Chester (18), followed by the health care and social assistance, and the retail trade industries (14), and accommodations and food services (12) (U.S. Census Bureau 2016).

When these numbers are referenced with the following charts, which demonstrate the distribution of employment by industry, we see vastly different results. For example, the professional, scientific, and technical services industries have the largest number of business establishments, but generate only 6.9% of employment in the Town of Chester and 0% in the CDP. On the other end of the spectrum, the education services and the health care and social assistance industry establishments in the CDP and the Town, account for the largest share of employment of any single industry group at 17.5 and 21.6%, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau 2016).

Image courtesy of Chester Ambulance

Image courtesy of Inn Victoria

Chart 6. Number of Town of Chester Businesses by Industry

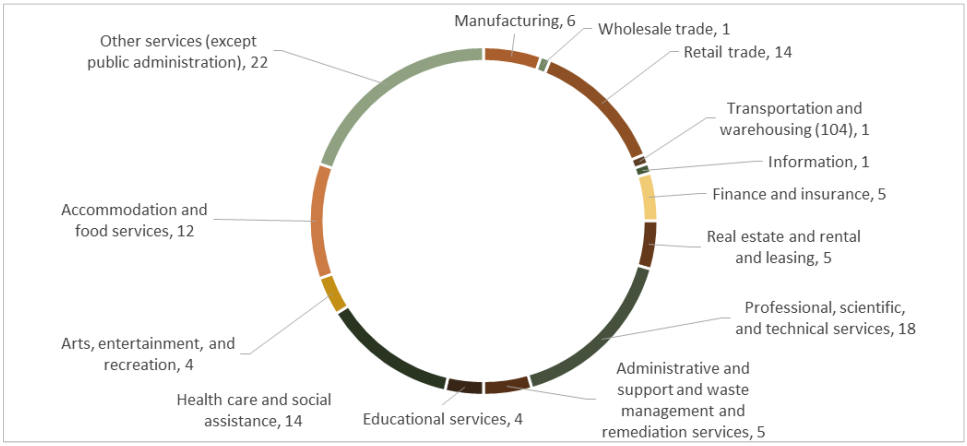

Manufacturing, 6
Wholesale trade, 1
Retail trade, 14
Transportation and warehousing (104), 1
Information, 1
Finance and insurance, 5
Real estate and rental and leasing, 5
Professional, scientific, and technical services, 18
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services, 5
Educational services, 4
Health care and social assistance, 14
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, 4
Accommodation and food services, 12
Other services (except public administration), 22

Chart 7. Percent of CDP Employment by Industry

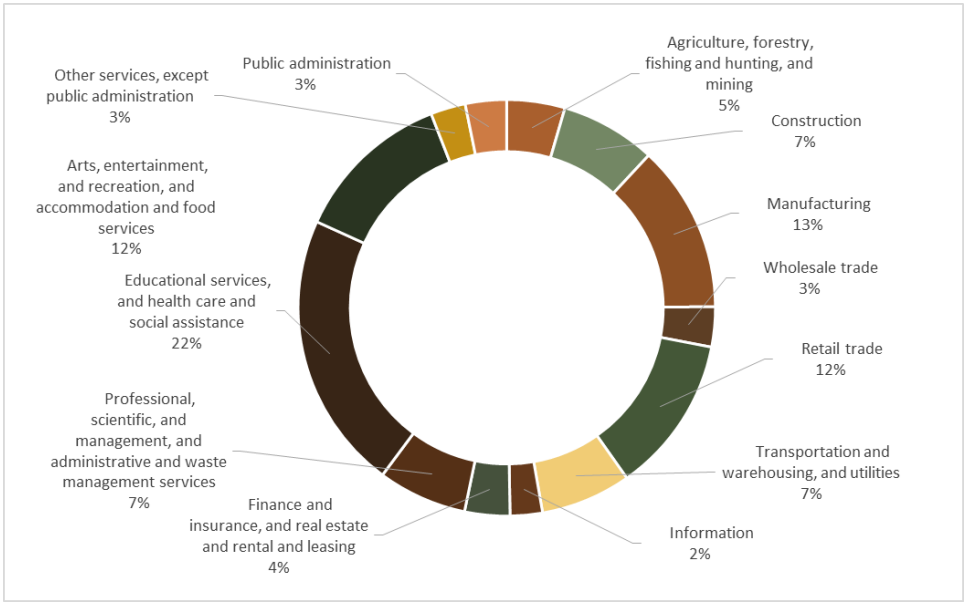
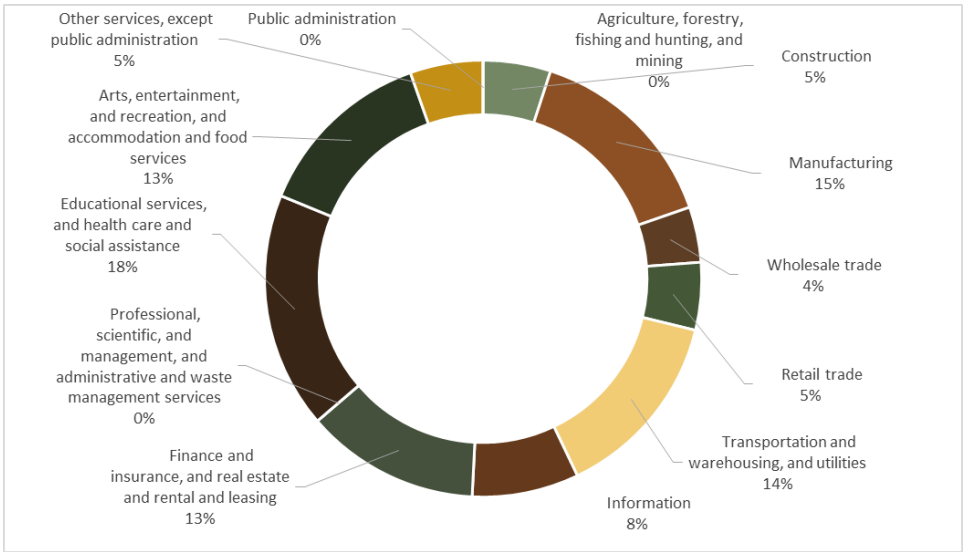

Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining 5%
Construction 7%
Manufacturing 13%
Wholesale trade 3%
Retail trade 12%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities 7%
Information 2%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing 4%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services 7%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance 22%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services 12%
Other services, except public administration 3%
Public administration 3%

Chart 8. Percent of Town of Chester Employment by Industry


Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining 0%
Construction 5%
Manufacturing 15%
Wholesale trade 4%
Retail trade 5%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities 14%
Information 8%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing 13%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services 0%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance 18%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services 13%
Other services, except public administration 5%
Public administration 0%

The Tourism Economy

The Tourism Economy consists of sectors that provide goods and services to visitors to the local economy, as well as to the local population. These industries typically include: retail trade; passenger transportation; arts, entertainment, and recreation; and accommodation and food services; and that is how we have defined the Tourism Economy in this report. The exact proportion of the jobs in these sectors that are attributable to expenditures by visitors rather than by local residents is unknown, but it is known that these sectors are highly correlated with visitation and visitor expenditures.

The Tourism Economy sectors account for approximately 22% of all employment in Windsor County in 2014.

Chart 9 demonstrates that the Tourism Economy in Windsor County decreased from 24% of total employment in 1998 to 22% of total employment in 2014. **Chart 10** corroborates this data and demonstrates that the Tourism Economy in Windsor County has remained stagnant and shrank independent of other economic activity in the County. For example, between 1998 and 2014, Tourism Economy employment decreased from 4,657 jobs to 4,405 jobs (a 5.4% decrease), while non-tourism employment grew over this same period from 15,137 jobs to 15,342 jobs (a 1.4% increase) (U.S. Census Bureau 2016; U.S. Department of Commerce 2016).

Chart 11 demonstrates that while non-Tourism Economy employment increased by 205 jobs between 1998 and 2013, Tourism Economy jobs decreased by 252 jobs (U.S. Census Bureau 2016; U.S. Department of Commerce 2016).

One result of having a smaller Tourism Economy is minimal changes in seasonality and seasonal employment, as displayed in **Chart 12**, when Windsor County is compared to the U.S. at large. The annual unemployment trend in Windsor County remains more consistent than that of the U.S. as a whole, suggesting the economy of Windsor is less seasonally dependent than the average local economy in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Labor 2016).

Industries within the Tourism Economy often pay relatively low wages, although this can vary by industry sub-sector and by geography to some extent, and Windsor County is no exception. As demonstrated in **Chart 13**, the average annual wages within the Tourism Economy in Windsor County is approximately $22,381, while annual average non-tourism wages, not displayed, are approximately $45,069. While this disparity is important to consider, it is also useful to remember that many Tourism Economy jobs are seasonal and/or part-time, and many employees often work two or more part-time and/or seasonal jobs instead of a single full-time, year-round job (U.S. Department of Labor 2016).

Chart 9. Percent of Total Private Employment in the Tourism Economy

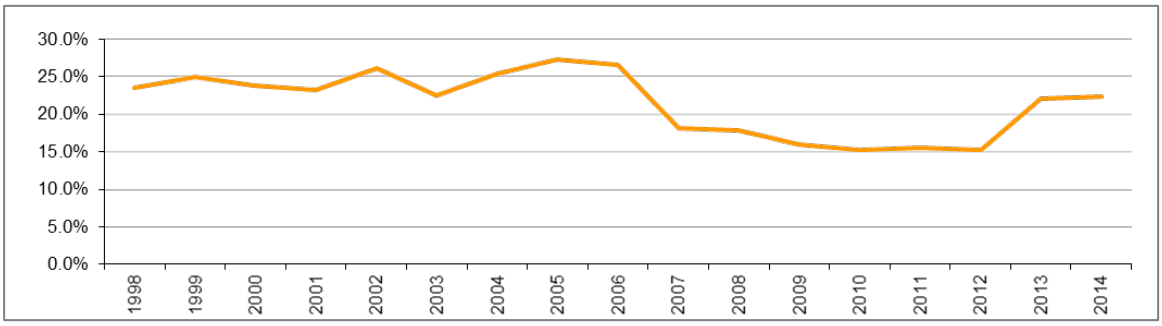


Chart 10. Total Private Employment and Tourism Economy Employment in Windsor County

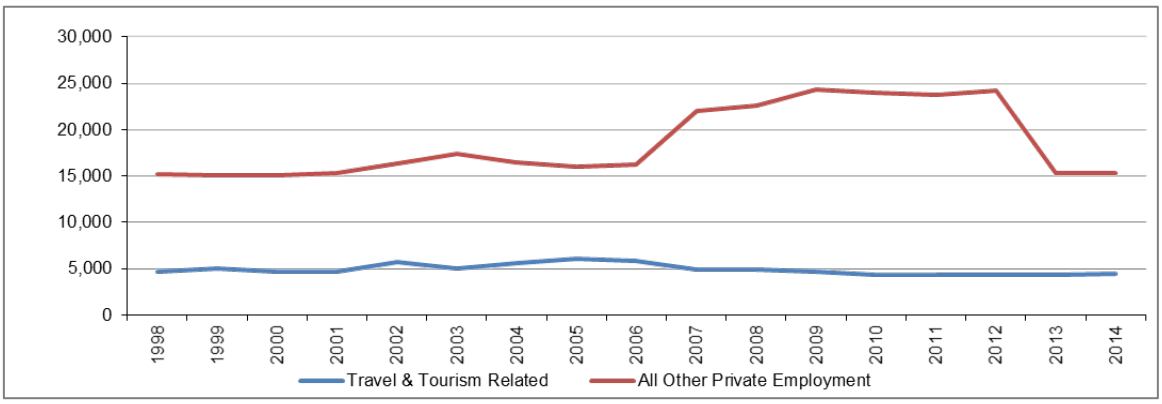


Chart 11. New Jobs in the Tourism Economy in Windsor County

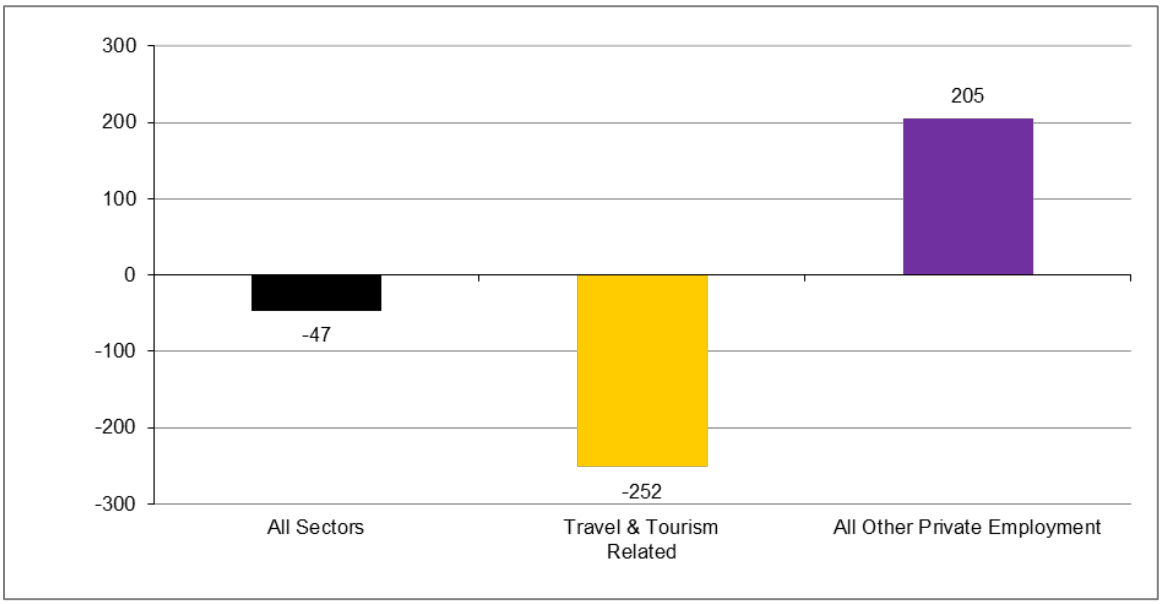


Chart I2. Seasonal Unemployment in Windsor County

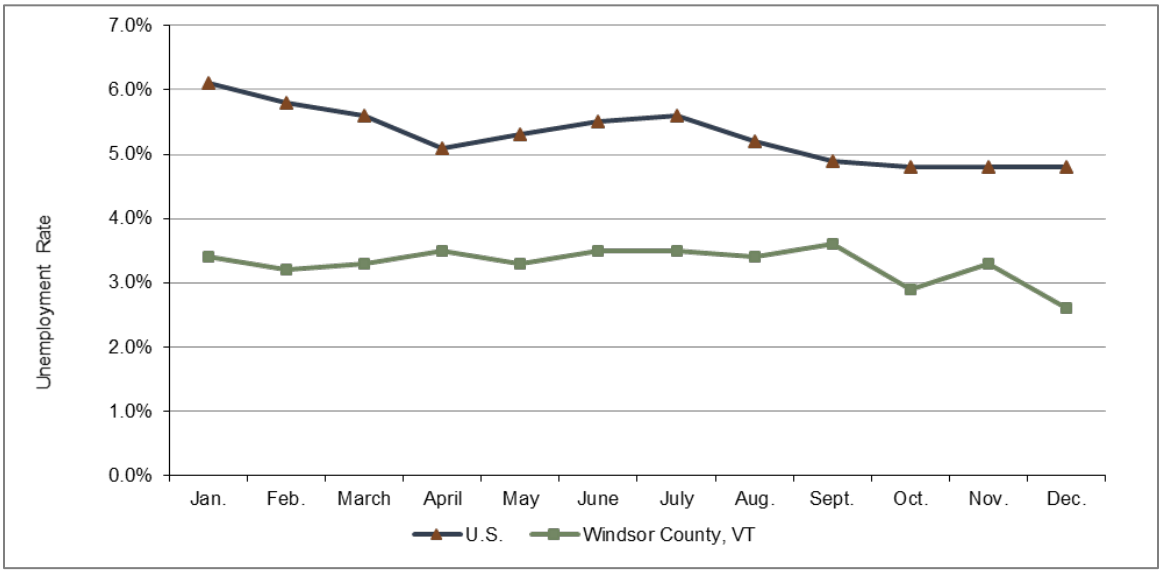
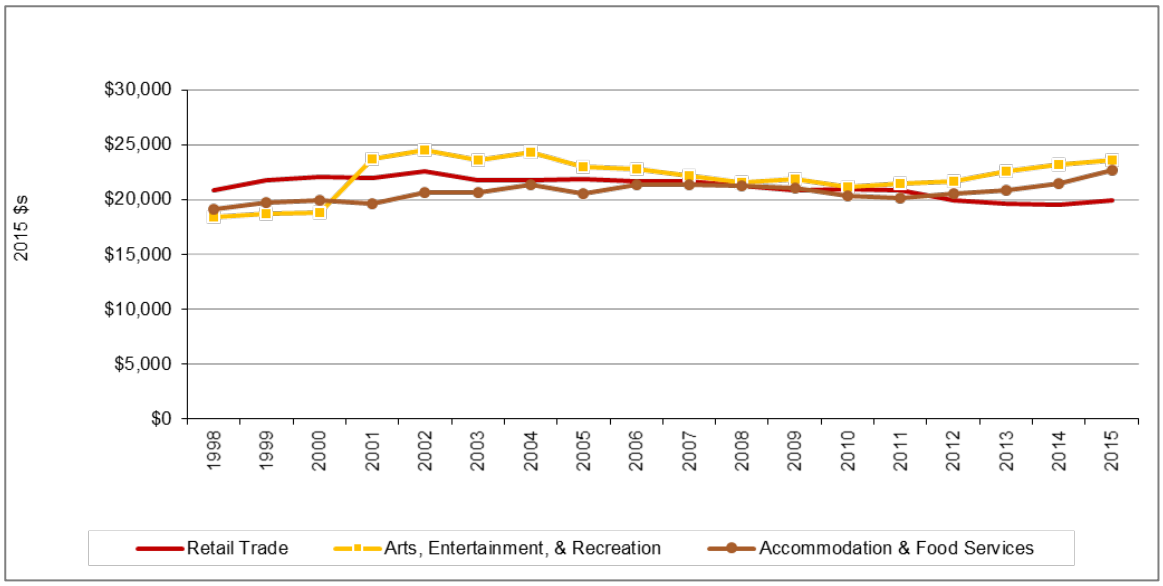


Chart I3. Average Annual Wages in Industries including Travel & Tourism, Windsor County, 1998–2015



MARKET CONDITIONS

A market and sector analysis was completed to inform the development of this Master Plan and to help define the vision for the Village Center. This information and insight was also valuable to weigh alternative strategies, initiatives, and potential development projects for implementation.

Important highlights of this analysis are provided in the following discussion. The complete assessment can be found in Appendix B.

Business Mix and Occupancy in Chester

Village Center

There were seventy-nine businesses observed in the Village Center. Retail businesses are the most common type of business, followed by Other Services, and Accommodations and Food Services. Village Center businesses account for some but not all the businesses in the Town of Chester. The Village Center commercial occupancy is estimated at 94%, which is high and indicative of favorable economic conditions. Vacant spaces offer development opportunities, and two spaces are currently vacant on the village green. One space has been for sale for some time, starting at $600,000 and is currently offered at $300,000. This is indicative of low demand for real estate.

The proximate vacancies of former Vermont Institute of Contemporary Art (VTICA) and old Jiffy Mart present a potential opportunity to re-imagine the intersection of Depot Street and Main Street.

Businesses on Main Street – Image courtesy of Tom Hildreth

Resident Markets

The Resident Market Area for the village center is defined as the area within a 45-minute drive time. The total Resident Market Area contains 102,000 persons in 44,000 households with consumer expenditure potential in retail stores and restaurants of $1.5 billion. The population of the Resident Market Area has a median age of 46.4, which is slightly older than the State of Vermont and the U.S. The median household size is 2.25 persons, slightly smaller than that of the State of Vermont and much smaller than that of the U.S. The Resident Market Area has a median household income of about $50,700, which is slightly less than that of the State of Vermont ($53,700) and that of the U.S. ($54,100).

Defined as the Primary Market Area, the Town of Chester population represents approximately 3% of the total population and household spending potential in the defined Resident Market Area. In the Town of Chester, there are 3,200 persons in 1,400 households with consumer expenditure potential in retail stores and restaurants of $49.2 million. The Primary Market Area has a median household income of $46,200, which is less than the Resident Market Area, the State of Vermont, and the U.S.

In 2016 there were an estimated 1,060 residents in the Village Center, approximately one third of the Town's population. Compared to the Town's population, the population in the Village Center tends to be proportionally older, and the households are smaller with proportionally lower incomes and more non-family households.

Resident Market Retail Sales Gap

Chester retail and restaurant businesses capture a share of consumer spending, some of which "leaks" outside the defined Resident Market Area. In general, a positive sales gap indicates a potential opportunity for a new or expanding business to capture more sales in its market area. A negative sales gap indicates strength in those sectors within the market area, that businesses are importing dollars from consumers that resident outside the market area. Negative sales gaps may also indicate the effect of tourist market segments.

In the Resident Market Area, businesses in five sectors draw more dollars than the resident households in the area are estimated to spend annually on retail trade and food services. These include: Food and Beverage Stores, Gasoline Stations, Miscellaneous Store Retailers, Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, & Music Stores. All other sectors in the Primary Market Area have a leakage of consumer spending outside of the area. The top three include General Merchandise Stores, Food Services and Drinking Places, and Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers.

In the Primary Market Area, Chester businesses in two sectors, Gasoline Stations and Miscellaneous Store Retailers, draw more dollars than the resident households in Chester are estimated to spend annually on retail trade and food services. All other sectors in the Primary Market Area have a leakage of consumer spending outside of Chester. The top three include Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers, Food and Beverage Stores, and General Merchandise Stores.

Trends in Taxable Sales

Another source of data on retail, meals, alcohol, and lodging are the taxable sales reported by the State of Vermont's Department of Revenue. Chester's taxable sales in 2015 were as follows:

- Retail = $8.1 million
  - Chester, like other jurisdictions, saw its retail sales peak in 2007 and decline due to the economic recession. Retail in Chester and most jurisdictions has yet to fully recover to pre-recession levels, after adjusting for inflation.
  - Retail, which is driven most by resident spending peaks in the fourth quarter, October through December, statewide and in Windsor County. In Chester, retail sales peak during the summer, July through September with January through March having the least sales. Ludlow's retail sales pattern reflects wintertime ski activity at Okemo Mountain Resort.
- Meals = $3.1 million
  - Chester's taxable meals sales have increased at a greater rate than other comparative jurisdictions. Growth in Chester, Windsor County, Ludlow, and Springfield is outpacing the growth in taxable meals sales statewide. This may reflect the opening of new eateries over the period.
  - Taxable meal sales in Chester peak in summer (July through September), and are lowest between April and June.
- Lodging = $1.1 million
  - Chester's taxable lodging sales have exceeded pre-recession levels on an inflation adjusted basis. The growth in taxable lodging sales is on par with Ludlow and Windsor County. This growth rate, however, is lower than that of the state.
  - Most taxable lodging sales occur in summer and winter. Spring (April through June) is the low season in Chester.
- Alcohol = $695,000
  - Alcohol sales were 113% higher in 2015 than they were in 2005, exceeding growth rates within the state, Windsor County, and Ludlow, which posted a 50% increase in alcohol sales.

Seasonal Housing

Seasonal residents are an important market segment for business in the Village Center. Seasonal residents own homes, and often visit for extended periods. With AirBnB and Vacation Rental by Owner (VRBO), some seasonal housing units are being rented on a transient basis. Based on U.S. Census data between 2000 and 2010, the number of seasonal housing units increased from 250 to 317 (26.8%). The total percent of housing units identified as seasonal has risen to 17.7% over this same period. While a sizable percentage, this is lower than some other neighboring communities such as Grafton (30.0%), Cavendish (31.4%) and Ludlow (66.8%), but more than Springfield (3.1%), and Rockingham (4.8%).

Tourist Markets

Relative to other communities in the area, Chester is not a tourist destination. Nonetheless, it contains both a variety of tourist oriented businesses and access to large tourist markets in the region. It is proximate to Interstate 91 and close to Okemo Mountain Resort and second (or seasonal) home communities in Chester and in nearby towns. In Chester, touristic assets include a new excursion train out of Chester Depot, historic architecture, small-scale lodgings, destination dining, and identity that is positioned by the primary destination marketing organization in the region, the Okemo Valley Chamber of Commerce, as the place in the region for

arts and antiques. Certainly, the regional tourist market and key destinations such as Okemo Mountain Resort in Ludlow and other ski resorts in southern Vermont, and along with the Vermont Country Store in Rockingham and Weston create pass through traffic.

Based on an analysis of state and local tourism data, the tourist market in the Chester region has an estimated 700,000 overnight person trips by visiting friends and relatives, overnight guests in lodging properties and second home owners. These tourists represent an estimated $340 million in potential consumer expenditures in the Chester area, which roughly coincides with the Resident Market Area.

Day and Pass Through Visitors

Day visitors from less proximate areas of Vermont and tourists passing through Chester are also a market segment, but overlap with estimates of overnight visitors, especially those passing through Chester and staying overnight in Ludlow that are skiing at Okemo Mountain Resort. While ski area visitation is most dominant, the monthly trends in lodging, retail and meals would indicate that non-winter periods are more important to Chester's tourism oriented businesses than the winter season. Chester's economy, although smaller overall, is more diversified than Ludlow's and other Towns that are more heavily reliant on tourism than Chester.

Aggregate Consumer Spending Potential

Spending by overnight visitors to areas near Chester accounts for approximately 23% that of total Resident Market Area spending in the retail and restaurant categories. Combined resident and tourist market consumer spending potential in Chester's resident and tourist market areas is $1.8 billion annually, not including day and pass through travel, much of which would be due to visitors staying in the area. Based on Town-wide estimates of retail, restaurant and lodging sales, Chester businesses are capturing 1% of aggregate consumer spending potential in the region, suggesting that there may be an opportunity for Chester businesses to capture additional spending.

COMMUNITY CAPACITY

Existing Capital Planning

Like most communities, the Town of Chester has been investing in its infrastructure on a consistent basis through its Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The most recent CIP for Chester has a fund balance of approximately $430,000 per year between 2016–2028. Most of the CIP revenues are derived from General Fund transfers.

While the CIP includes a host of capital expenditures, including allocations to fire/police and public works, it does include specific categories for current facilities, recreation and historic facilities. Under these categories the CIP anticipates expenditures for Town Hall, library, the Academy Building, Yosemite building, and upgrades at the Pinnacle Recreation facility. Ongoing expenditures of around $13,000 per year are indicated in the CIP for historic structures.

The CIP also addresses sidewalk improvements in the 2017 budget for work that was approved in 2016.

Grants and Grant Management

The ongoing work of planning for and implementing important projects within the community inevitably relies on the securing and managing of grants from various regional, state and federal agencies. This process is time consuming, particularly for smaller communities such as Chester, but inevitably vital to leverage local financial resources as effectively as possible. Capital projects, including some of those already discussed, can often take advantage of grants to extend local resources.

While small, the Town of Chester appears to be doing very well in its pursuit of grants. In 2017 the Town was managing well over $1.9M in grants associated with a range of projects. This included work on Route 35, sidewalk improvements, windows for the Academy building, roadwork on Popple Dungeon and this study. Town matches were addressed via bonding or via capital expenditures.

The Town is budgeting seed money for future grants including those to support culvert work (Better Backroads), Municipal Planning Grants (zoning update), and work on the Brookside trails/bridge.

Arts

Art is an important part of community life in Chester. Its influence is evident in the historic architecture and details throughout the community. The Village Center is home to many craftsmen, studios, galleries and artisan related businesses who benefit from the tourist traffic in town. As such, the Okemo Valley Chamber of Commerce—the primary destination marketing organization in the region—positions Chester as the regional destination in the region for arts and antiques. Art is also an element that brings the community together and draws in visitors for events such as the Chester Fall Festival.

Tents lined up for the Chester Fall Festival – Image courtesy of Chesterfallfestival.org

With so many local artists, art is not as visible in the public realm as one might expect. There is an opportunity to better integrate art into the everyday life of residents through small additions to the community fabric that engage and enliven visitors and residents alike.

Promotion of the arts and arts-related businesses is done by several local groups and businesses, but there is not currently a single clearinghouse or entity with responsibility for promoting arts or working to expand the diversity of artistic offerings in the community.

Economic Development

Chester is included in one of twelve planning and economic development areas designated by the State of Vermont, Southern Windsor County. Southern Windsor Regional Planning Commission (SWCRPC) and Springfield Regional Development Corporation (SRDC) both have the same target service areas: ten towns in Southeastern Vermont including Andover, Baltimore, Cavendish, Chester, Ludlow, Reading, Springfield, Weathersfield, West Windsor, and Windsor.

The SWRPC provides a broad, regional view of economic development including the development of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The 2011 East Central Vermont CEDS Plan outlines a broad vision for the region including support of a balanced economy and continued high quality of life for residents. One particularly relevant aspect of this plan is the importance of rail and particularly the rail spur in Chester Depot. Working with SWRPC on prioritizing the elements of this Master Plan within future CEDS would be valuable.

The SRDC is a private, non-profit regional development corporation with a focus on helping create and sustain employment in the region. SRDC provides assistance to businesses including siting, financial packages, workforce training, permitting and site development. SRDC hosts the regional offices of the Small Business Development Center. Whereas SWCRPC is more broad and strategic in its role, the SRDC is more tactical—working with new or expanding businesses.

More locally, the Chester Economic Development Committee (CEDC) manages the Chester Development Fund, whose main objective is to improve, stimulate and assist in maintaining the economic and physical environment of Chester. It does so by creating and maintaining employment or improving the efficiencies of an existing operation. Through its activities, the fun also assists in maintaining and/or stabilizing the tax base through funding of small and medium size enterprises and municipal activities via loans to assist in start-up, expansion or efficiency improvement.

The Okemo Valley Chamber of Commerce is the region's tourism marketing and business association representing nine towns including Andover, Cavendish, Chester, Grafton, Londonderry, Ludlow, Mount Holly, Plymouth, and Weston. Chester used to have a local chamber of commerce that reportedly went out of business and was merged with the Okemo Valley Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber provides the marketing arm for the region and operates the "Your Place in Vermont" website (yourplaceinvermont.com/). This includes a directory of lodging, dining, and events. The lack of a local source for this information was noted during the process

Aligning all of these entities together around the ideas and concepts of the Master Plan could help unify efforts and provide greater focus to economic development and marketing.

Community Identity and Messaging

While several entities communicate the identity, attractions and events of the Village Center, there is not currently a single clearinghouse or entity with responsibility for doing so. As a result, there are often mixed messaging and it can be difficult for even residents to know what events are taking place in the community. In many communities, a downtown association or committee may take on this role.

Image courtesy of The Chester Telegraph

Image courtesy of Chester Economic Development Committee/meetchestervermont.org

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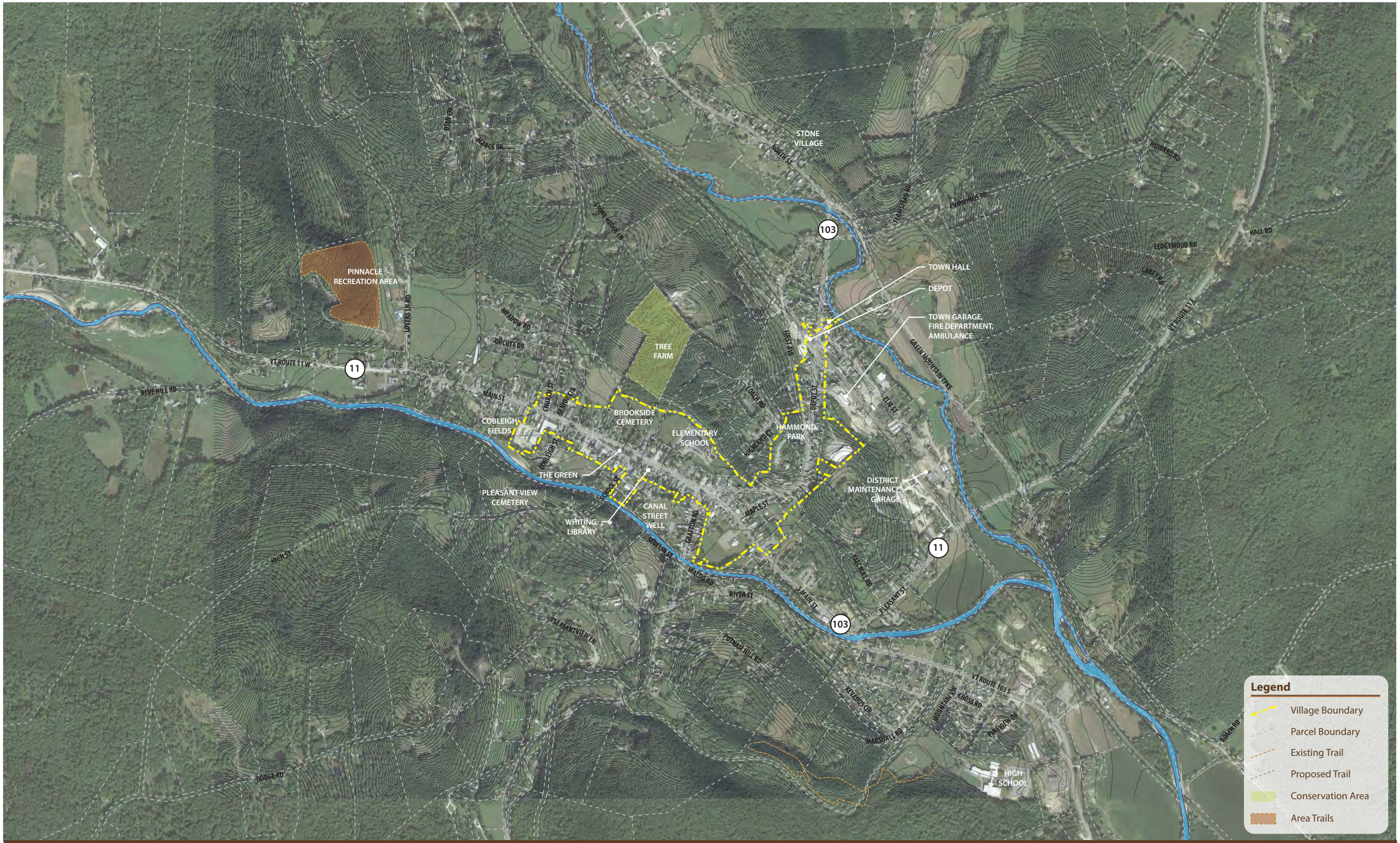

Figure 1: CONTEXT MAP

Rediscovering Chester

A Master Plan For Chester Village Center | Figure 1: CONTEXT MAP

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Figure 2: VILLAGE CENTER MAP

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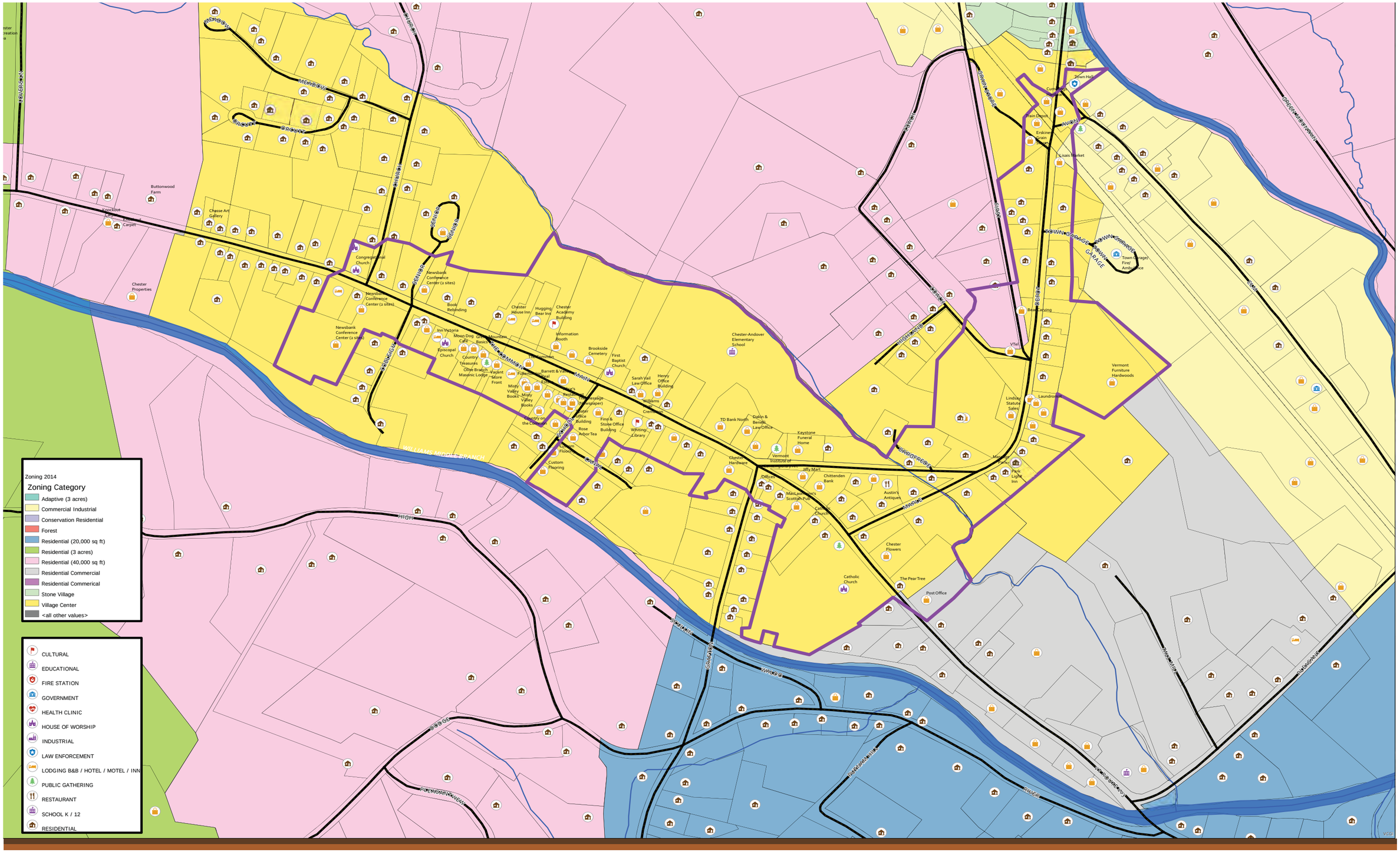

Figure 3: EXISTING ZONING MAP

Rediscovering Chester

A Master Plan For Chester Village Center | Figure 3: EXISTING ZONING MAP

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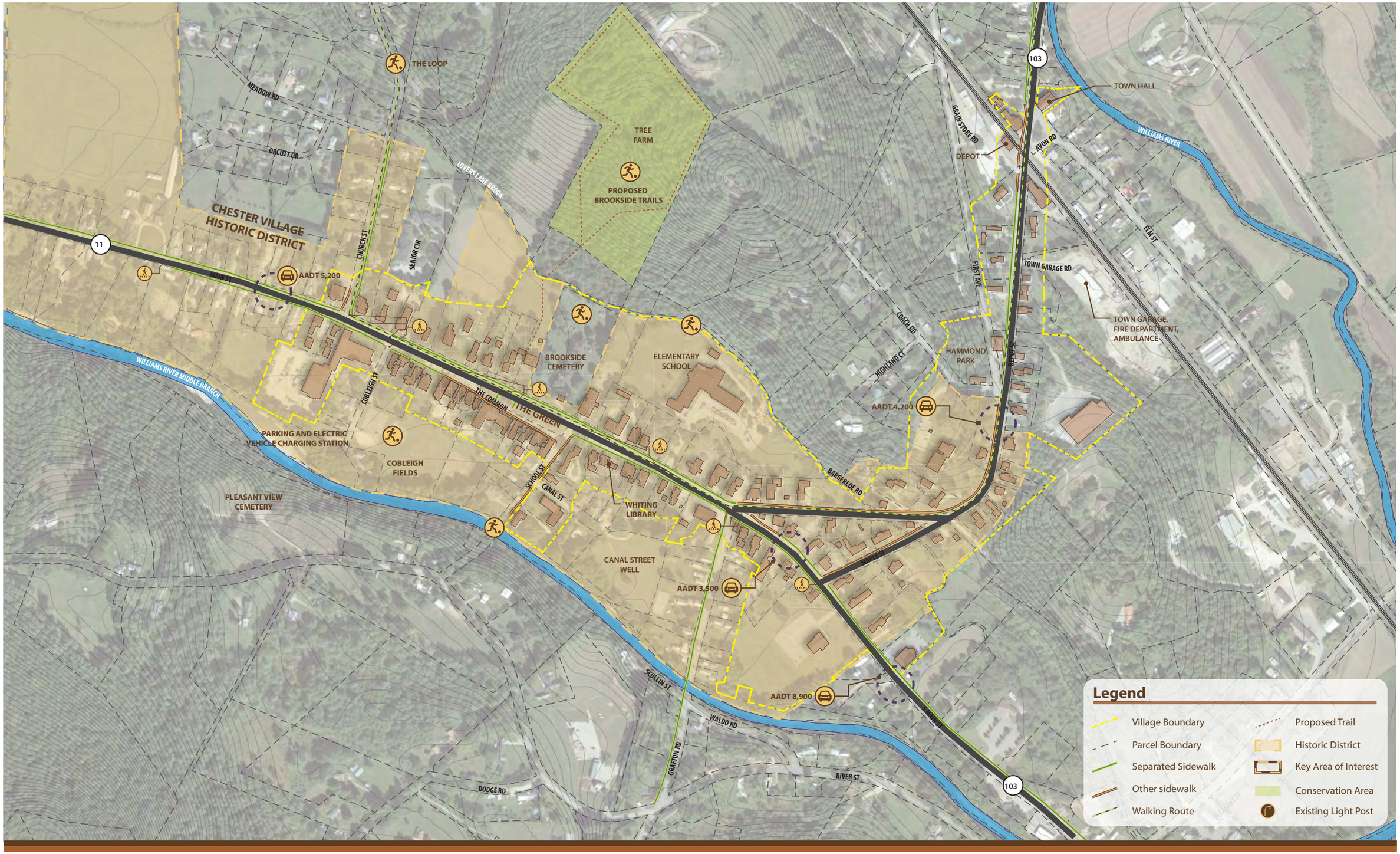

Figure 4: CIRCULATION AND MOBILITY MAP

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Chapter Three: Seeking Community Input

The development of this Master Plan included several distinct levels and types of public engagement including an engaged Steering Committee, public meetings, stakeholder meetings, focus groups and a public survey. This community engagement process is documented herein.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The first level was the involvement of a diverse Steering Committee that acted as a community sounding board and helped to guide the project through each task. The Steering Committee helped the consulting team understand the local context and issues, identify specific opportunities that the consulting team should evaluate, review draft materials and provide feedback and input, and evaluate options and implementation challenges. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Steering Committee acted as an "Ambassador" to the process—attending public meetings, having conversations with neighbors, and encouraging community involvement.

The Steering Committee met twelve times. The focus of the meetings varied:

- November 9, 2016: Steering Committee kick-off meeting to cover the scope and purpose of the project, steps in the process & public engagement approach, Steering Committee roles and responsibilities, and baseline data review.
- December 12, 2016: This meeting included a continued discussion on Baseline Conditions—what we have learned so far and where additional information is needed, goals for the December Public Meeting, and a Steering Committee visioning session.
- January 17, 2017: Review and discussion on the Community Vision Workshop, review of VHB Analysis related to circulation within the "Triangle," discussion of vision elements and study locations for physical improvements, review of the Village Master Plan Document Outline, and discussion of the March public workshop.
- February 14, 2017: Continued discussion of circulation around the "Triangle" (maintaining existing two-way circulation preferred; see Chapter Five for more information), Steering Committee working session around the concepts and study locations explored in the Master Plan.
- February 28, 2017: On-going working session on concepts and study locations explored in Master Plan, consideration of DRAFT vision statement, preparation for March public workshop.
- March 23, 2017: Review and discussion of March public workshop, review and editing of DRAFT vision statements.
- April 4, 2017: Review and editing of DRAFT vision statements, review of projects lists, discussion of improving communications within the community.
- May 18, 2017: Review of implementation chart.
- May 23, 2017: Review of implementation chart, review Chapter Seven.
- June 13, 2017: Review of implementation chart, signage review, review List of Historic Buildings to be highlighted, walk around to view ideas.
- July 11, 2017: Review of Final Draft Plan.
- August 18, 2017: Review of Plans and Key Initiatives.

CHESTER ON THE GREEN

On Saturday, September 17, 2017, members of the Town and the consulting team attended Chester on the Green (Fall Festival) to leverage this popular community event to listen and learn from residents and visitors on what makes Chester a special place. The consultant team provided information on the effort, solicited input, and invited the public to visit the project website and participate in the online community survey.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The Rediscovering Chester Survey was open for several weeks during September and October of 2016. It was advertised through the Town mail and email list, with post cards distributed throughout the community, with a press release, and through promotion at the other community events. The survey received almost 200 responses, which is significant given the population of the Town. About 69% of respondents were full-time residents of the Town of Chester, with the remaining 31% being visitors and second-home owners.

A summary of key results from the survey are presented in **Chart 14**. The full survey results are available in Appendix C.

Survey Respondent Characteristics

Based on the survey results, the Village Center is generally frequented for either a quick visit or an extended multi-night stay. Both resident (i.e., live in the Town of Chester) and non-resident visitors were represented in the survey. Non-resident visitors generally came from neighboring towns or from primary residences in New England. The survey did not capture a high proportion of overnight visitors, in part due to the difficulty of reaching that group through a web-based survey.

Reasons for Visiting the Village Center

Shopping, dining, and banking top the list of reasons for visiting Chester among all survey respondents, with nearly double the responses of other categories (see **Chart 15**). The factors most likely to influence non-resident visitor's decision to visit the Village Center is previous experience from a trip to the area or receiving a recommendation for a specific dining experience in town.

Chart I4. Where do you live year-round?

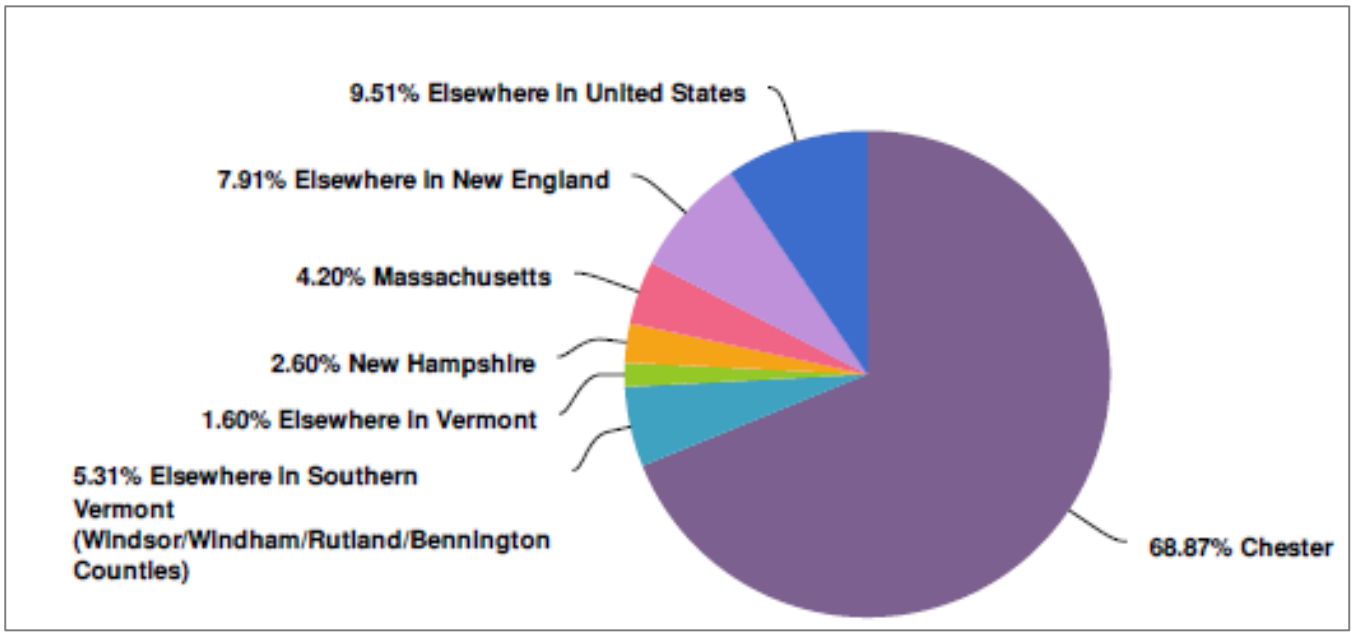
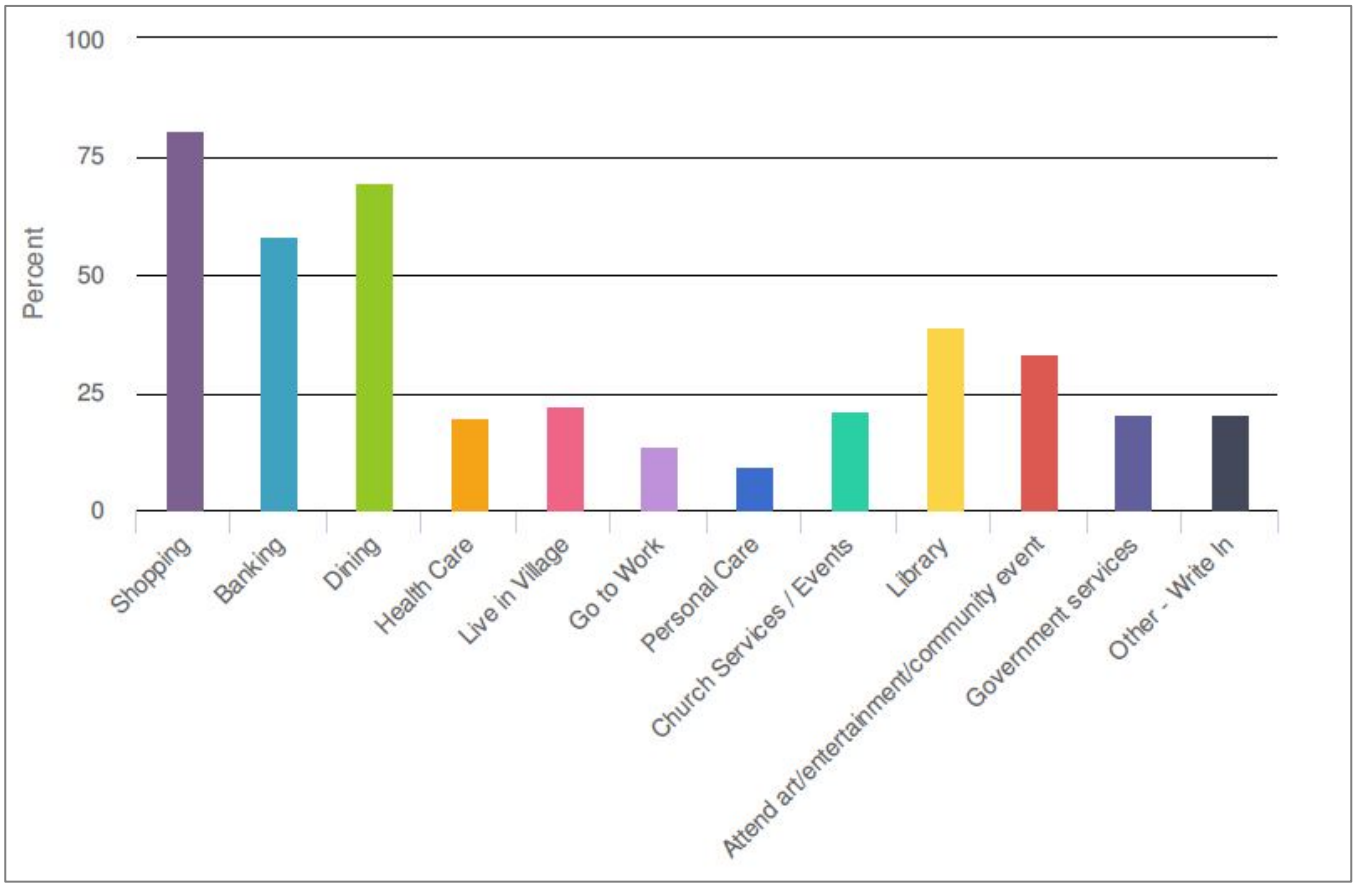

9.51% Elsewhere In United States
7.91% Elsewhere In New England
4.20% Massachusetts
2.60% New Hampshire
1.60% Elsewhere In Vermont
5.31% Elsewhere In Southern Vermont (Windsor/Windham/Rutland/Bennington Counties)
68.87% Chester

Chart I5. When you come to Chester Village Center, what are the usual reasons for your trip?



The following factors are ranked in order of importance of why survey respondents chose to visit the Village Center. Notably, "was just passing through" is ranked the lowest of all, indicating the decision to visit the Village Center is generally not made at the last minute while traveling on the highway.

1. Location near to my home
2. Small town-charm
3. Historic character
4. Near family and friends
5. Proximity to other attractions I wanted to visit
6. Cultural program and arts
7. I work there
8. Type of quality of lodging establishments
9. Was just passing through

The differences in perspective between residents and non-resident visitors was interesting. For both groups, the importance of "Small Town Charm" and "Historic Character" were important factors influencing why they visit. The "Location to home" was also very highly ranked, but with different meaning between the two groups. This combination of atmosphere and proximity appears central to why respondents visit Chester; it is relatively close to where people live and has appealing and attractive qualities.

Recommendations from friends and colleagues and web searches made up a clear majority of how non-resident visitors heard about the Village Center (see **Chart 16**).

More than half (51%) of survey respondents fall into the "Promoter" category, being very likely to recommend the Village Center to a friend or colleague. When visitors recommend activities in the Village Center, historic resources and dining experiences are typically shared within friends and family as the best things to do in Chester.

Ideas for Improvement

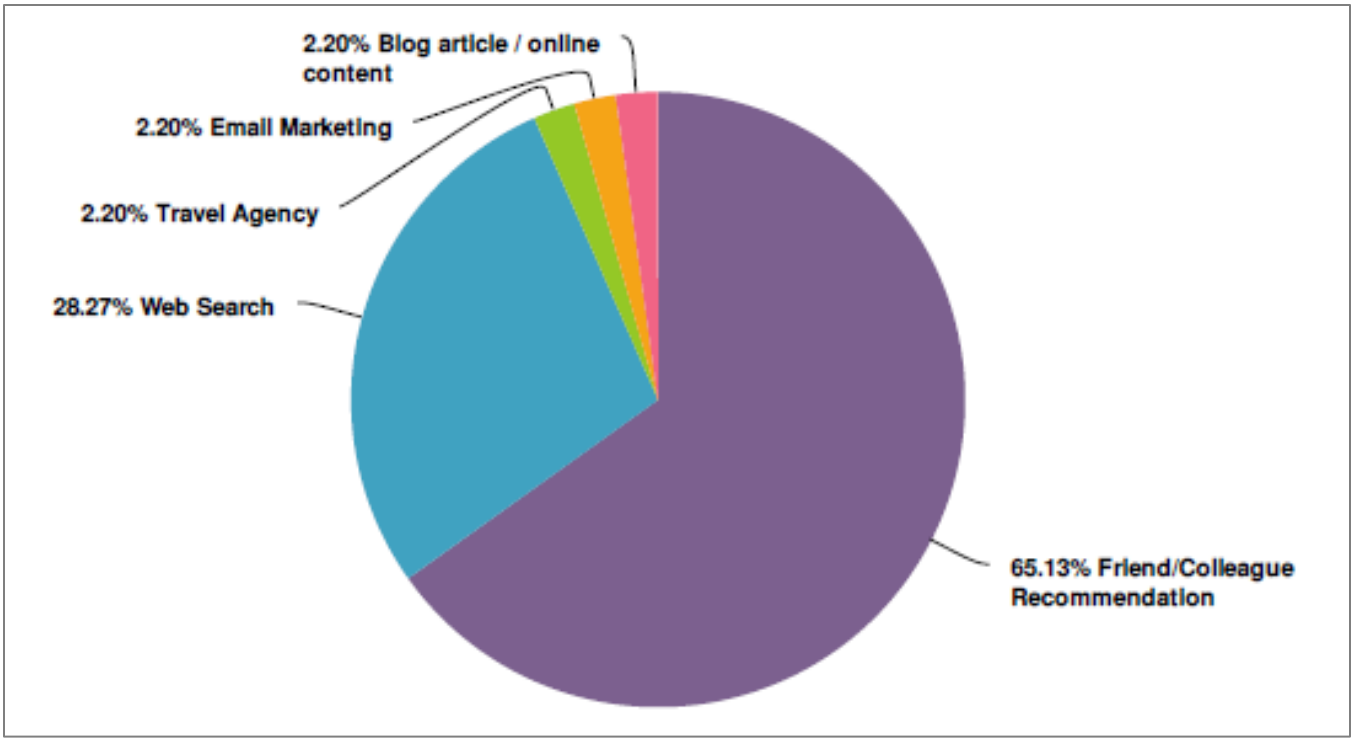
The following ideas were highly ranked by resident and non-resident visitors alike in terms of actions that would encourage them to visit and shop more often.

1. More special events
2. Greater variety of stores
3. Greater variety of restaurants
4. More arts or cultural events
5. Better access to public restrooms

Improving degrading or non-existent sidewalks and the need for installation of lighting and other streetscape improvements was identified by survey respondents. Ideas for improving the maintenance and promotion of recreation resources were also shared.

Comments regarding dining options (quality and quantity), availability of recreation, retail shopping, the number and timing of events, and the benefit of the community's small-town feel were generally mixed with contradicting viewpoints being expressed.

Chart 16. How did you hear about Chester Village Center?



FOCUS GROUP WORKSHOP

A Focus Group Workshop was conducted on October 22, 2016 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Town Hall Auditorium. The day-long Community Focus Group Workshop was facilitated by representatives from the Town of Chester and consultants from SE Group and ConsultEcon. The community workshop offered residents and the public at large opportunities to provide input, suggestions, comments and ideas on how to strengthen and improve the long-term vibrancy within the Village.

The Workshop was organized around four main topic areas: Arts, Culture and History, Retail, and Local Business, Food and Lodging and Recreation and Agriculture. Residents were welcome to come for any specific topic that interested them, or stay for the day. A large number of residents were able to stay throughout the day. Overall about ninety persons attended the four group discussions.

Each topic area received a focused round-table discussion. Residents shared ideas as well as challenges, and were able to speak together in intimate community conversations. Large maps of the Village and relevant information on each topic was provided as a starting point. Key pad polling devices were also used to ask questions and see results in real time. Questions asked in the focus groups were made available through the online survey as well, so data could be interpreted together.

The complete results of the focus group discussion can be found in Appendix D.

Key Community Inputs

The focus group event highlighted many important attitudes in the community that the Master Plan should consider:

1. The community is strongly supportive of its historic resources and character. Concern about the "decay" of some historic resources is high.
2. "Arts" appears to be hidden within the community. Many people value it and actively participate in it, but the presence of art is not "top of mind" at the community scale. Art is not celebrated as much as people think it should be.
3. Many participants felt that cultural events were "limited" in part because of a lack of communication and networking.
4. Many participants felt the culture of Chester does not align with their values. Central to this was a concern about lack of alignment in the community about what is important.
5. Local businesses are important to Chester and most participants felt new businesses would be good, particularly locally-serving ones.
6. Parking is generally considered good, but wayfinding and signage are inconsistent and lacking.
7. Walkability and lighting could be improved in the Village Center to make the experience better and safer.
8. The role the Town plays in supporting local business was not well understood by participants; some felt the Town could do more while others thought the Town's support was adequate.
9. Many were considered about being "too tourist" focused; while others felt tourism provided a greater opportunity.
10. Recreation is something that appealed to participants and expanding access to recreation would be good. Aligning recreation with other community attributes (history, art) might be appropriate.
11. Biking within the Village is difficult and could be improved. Connecting the community together would be valued.

12. Participants felt many of the community resources (parks, open space, etc.) could be better connected and better communicated to the public.
13. Agriculture exists, but like art, has not been as visible as some think it could be. Lack of community awareness on what role agriculture plays in the economy.

Image courtesy of Richard Amore, VT ACCD

COMMUNITY VISION WORKSHOP

Approximately forty community members and stakeholders convened at the Chester Town Hall Auditorium on December 14, 2017 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. for a Community Vision Workshop facilitated by consultants from SE Group and VHB. As a key element of public involvement for this Master Plan, this community workshop offered residents and the public-at-large an opportunity to provide input, suggestions, comments and ideas on how to strengthen and improve the long-term vibrancy within the Village.

The workshop was organized around two parts: 1) a presentation of the foundations analysis; and 2) exploring the communities' vision in facilitated small-group discussions.

Foundations Analysis Presentation

The Foundations Analysis Presentation lasted about 45 minutes, including questions and input from participants. The presentation highlighted what has been learned to date and how it might inform the long-term vision for the master plan. It covered the variety of inputs that have been informing the master planning process to date, which include the comments gathered at the Chester on the Green event on September 17h, 2016, the Rediscovering Chester Website, the Village Center Survey, the Focus Group Workshop on October 22, 2016, previous and ongoing planning in the community, and the economic, market, and transportation research that has been completed for the project.

From these inputs seven foundational themes for strengthening and improving vibrancy in the Village emerged: Arts, Historic Resources and Character, Land Use and Design, Recreation, Wayfinding and Gateways, Business and Tourism, and Transportation and Mobility. The presentation provided meeting participants with opportunity statements related to each theme for them to consider throughout the visioning process.

Small Group Discussions

Following the presentation of the baseline conditions and the foundational themes, meeting participants were broken up into small groups to explore the vision for the community and to brainstorm ways to improve the long-term vibrancy of the Village Center.

Rather than looking at the entirety of the Village Center, the overall study area was broken down into three focus areas. Additionally, the broader connection of the Village Center with the Town was addressed. These focus areas are shown graphically on **Figure 5**.

Participants were assigned to a focus area group based on a colored dot on their name tags. These included:

1. *Blue Group = "Village Core"*: The Village Core includes the Green and Commons, Brookside Cemetery, Cobleigh Fields and much of the Main Street Retail Core. The existing conditions within this area is shown on **Figure 6A**, as well as through existing photographs on **Figure 7A**.

2. *Orange Group = "The Triangle"*: The Triangle is the area generally bounded by Depot/Main and Maple Streets The existing conditions within this area is shown on **Figure 6B**, as well as through existing photographs on **Figure 7B**.

3. *Green Group = "Chester Depot"*: The Chester Depot includes the area from the Triangle to Town Hall. The existing conditions within this area is shown on **Figure 6C**, as well as through existing photographs on **Figure 7C**.

4. *Red Group = "The Big Picture"*: The Big Picture group looked at relationships between the other focus areas, big picture ideas, and broader regional connections.

Each group had an Opportunity Plan demonstrating existing conditions and relevant opportunity statements for their focus area to sketch ideas out on as well as a flip chart for making notes and recording ideas. See Chapter Four for more details.

Image courtesy of Richard Amore, VT ACCD

Key Community Inputs

After about an hour, each of the small groups provided a "report" back to the overall meeting on the key opportunities they explored. The following bullet points summarize key ideas from each focus area. Some of these ideas also aligned with suggestions from the Big Picture group.

Village Core

- Improving the streetscape and pedestrian/ commercial experience in the area surrounding the Commons and the Green. This could include changing the parking configuration, creating a sidewalk and streetscape along the business lining the Commons, undergrounding power and utility lines, adding seating/pause places to the Green, and other improvements.
- Opportunities for trail and improved pedestrian connections within and to the Village Core. These may include a riverwalk path along north side of Williams River, the proposed Brookside Trails, better connections to the Pinnacle, potential improvements to Church Street, a path connection to Coach Road and reconfiguration of crosswalks near the Green.
- Creating a better connection between Cobleigh Fields and the Green/Common areas. This could better leverage the Cobleigh Fields area for shared parking and events.
- Opportunities to better engage the Williams River at School Street with a "pocket park" or trailhead near the pedestrian bridge.
- Improvements and reorganization of the informational kiosk, restroom, and visitor center.
- Creating gateways to the Village core or "Central Business District" with banners, signage, streetscape improvements, etc. at Church/ Cobleigh and Main, and just west of Depot on Main.
- Addition of bicycle parking/bike racks at key nodes and the informational kiosk in the Village Core.

The Triangle

- Consideration of altering the traffic patterns around the Triangle Area to make Maple and Depot one-way streets.
- Redevelopment of the Jiffy Mart and/or Vermont Institute of Contemporary Arts sites. Private redevelopment could be encouraged or there may be an opportunity for the community acquire one or both properties for public/civic space, a visitor center, or to aid in redirecting traffic patterns.
- Opportunities for streetscape improvements to create cohesiveness and connections with and between the Village Core and Depot areas. This may include additional or improved crosswalks and sidewalks. This may include the addition of an improved pedestrian refuge island at Maple/ Depot that could be incorporated into the gateway at this location.
- Addition of gateway/wayfinding signage on either "end" of the Triangle at Maple/S. Main and Maple/Depot.

Chester Depot

- Leveraging the Train Station as a more active community space that could serve multiple functions throughout the year. These functions may include a community event space, a small museum, a visitor/info center, community/non-profit offices, etc.
- Improving parking and access around Town Hall, with the addition of a crosswalk across Elm and possibly redesigning the intersection of Elm, Avon and Depot Street.
- Addition of a trolley/shuttle/horse cab that could facilitate movement between the Depot and Village Core.
- Improving the visual character or "curb appeal" of the Depot with appropriate incentives and programs.
- Opportunities for a trail connection to the Brookside Trails area and the Village Core, possibly via Coach Road.
- Encouraging artisan and craftsman-oriented business development in the Depot, rather than restaurants/lodging.

Image courtesy of Richard Amore, VT ACCD

Image courtesy of Richard Amore, VT ACCD

Big Picture

- Preserving historic resources while allowing for compatible improvements to the community's rich fabric by aligning land use policy with historic resource considerations.
- Expanding opportunities and promotion of small festivals, events and concerts throughout the year (all seasons). This may include improved coordination and support, or streamlining of permitting and operations.
- Building local capacity to represent the interests of Chester in local and regional cooperative economic development organizations.
- Improving coordination, communications and dissemination of information across governments and organizations in the area.
- Finding opportunities for updated gateway signage, informational kiosks, and wayfinding throughout the Village. This could include hierarchy of signage that establishes and/or reinforces an image of the community and addresses signage related to community assets and resources: history, arts, recreation.
- Improving circulation for pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the Village by improving sidewalks, adding crosswalks, better defining pedestrian and vehicle spaces with curbing, and accommodating bicycle use in the Village (paths, bike parking, etc.).
- Managing the need for parking for retail and event use—adequacy of parking, location of parking, strategically locating electric vehicle charging stations near informational kiosks and/or commercial and recreational nodes.
- Adding exterior lighting and streetscape elements consistent with the community vision and character that can help connect various parts of the Village into a cohesive whole. Lighting should be of a period style, but utilize energy efficient and full-cut off technologies to conserve resources and protect the night sky.
- Marketing Chester with a consistent community "brand" (i.e., message, voice, visual style). This may be expressed through signage and wayfinding or through other promotional means such as a map of local businesses and attractions.
- Making local art more "visible" in public venues (parks, streetscape) and integrating art into the "everyday" life of residents.
- Identifying public infrastructure that provides opportunity to leverage private investment.
- Identifying ways to expand business opportunity through historic and cultural tourism—Depot, tourist excursion train, etc.
- Expanding opportunities for activities to increase the "lingering" for day visitors and to appeal to locals.

Image courtesy of Richard Amore, VT ACCD

Image courtesy of Richard Amore, VT ACCD

COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP

On Sunday, March 12, 2017 more than sixty participants attended a Community Design Workshop as part of the Master Plan process. The workshop was conducted from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the NewsBank Conference Center in Chester, Vermont.

The workshop included both presentation and open house components. A community presentation was given at two points in the afternoon (at 1:00 p.m. and at 3:00 p.m.) to allow participants to "drop in" whenever was convenient. In both sessions, the presentation provided a quick overview of what was learned to date, highlighted the overall concept for physical improvements in the Village Center and enabled participants to provide comments, offer suggestions and have some "back and forth" discussion.

The open house component of the meeting provided more opportunity for community discussion and input. During this time participants milled around design stations that focused on specific locations in town. The stations included conceptual renderings and graphics of the proposed improvements to facilitate small-group discussions and exploration of the conceptual framework of the master plan.

Chester residents engaged in many conversations with members of the consultant team and steering committee, as well as each other, helping to clarify their preferences and priorities for the community.

Key Community Inputs

Overall the comments provided by the community at the event affirmed many of previously heard ideas and suggestions. Some comments included support for key ideas (i.e., bicycle use, new signage) while suggesting changes (i.e., design, imagery) for some of the initial ideas presented.

Many residents had specifically raised concerns about changing the vehicular movement around the triangle (Maple/Depot and Main Streets) to one-way. During the meeting, SE Group affirmed the Steering Committees recommendation that this change not be undertaken and noted that the conceptual plans and ideas presented do to anticipate any change in vehicular circulation.

Concerns about how to move forward were expressed. Residents wanted to better understand how ideas like those proposed could move from this phase into reality. Related concern about costs for realizing some of these ideas was expressed.

SE Group and the Steering Committee outlined next steps which included development of the draft plan where the discussion about implementation would be more fully prepared and the how this plan might inform the ongoing Town Plan update process in the near term.

FINAL PLAN PRESENTATION

The Final Plan was presented to the Steering Committee on August 26, 2017.

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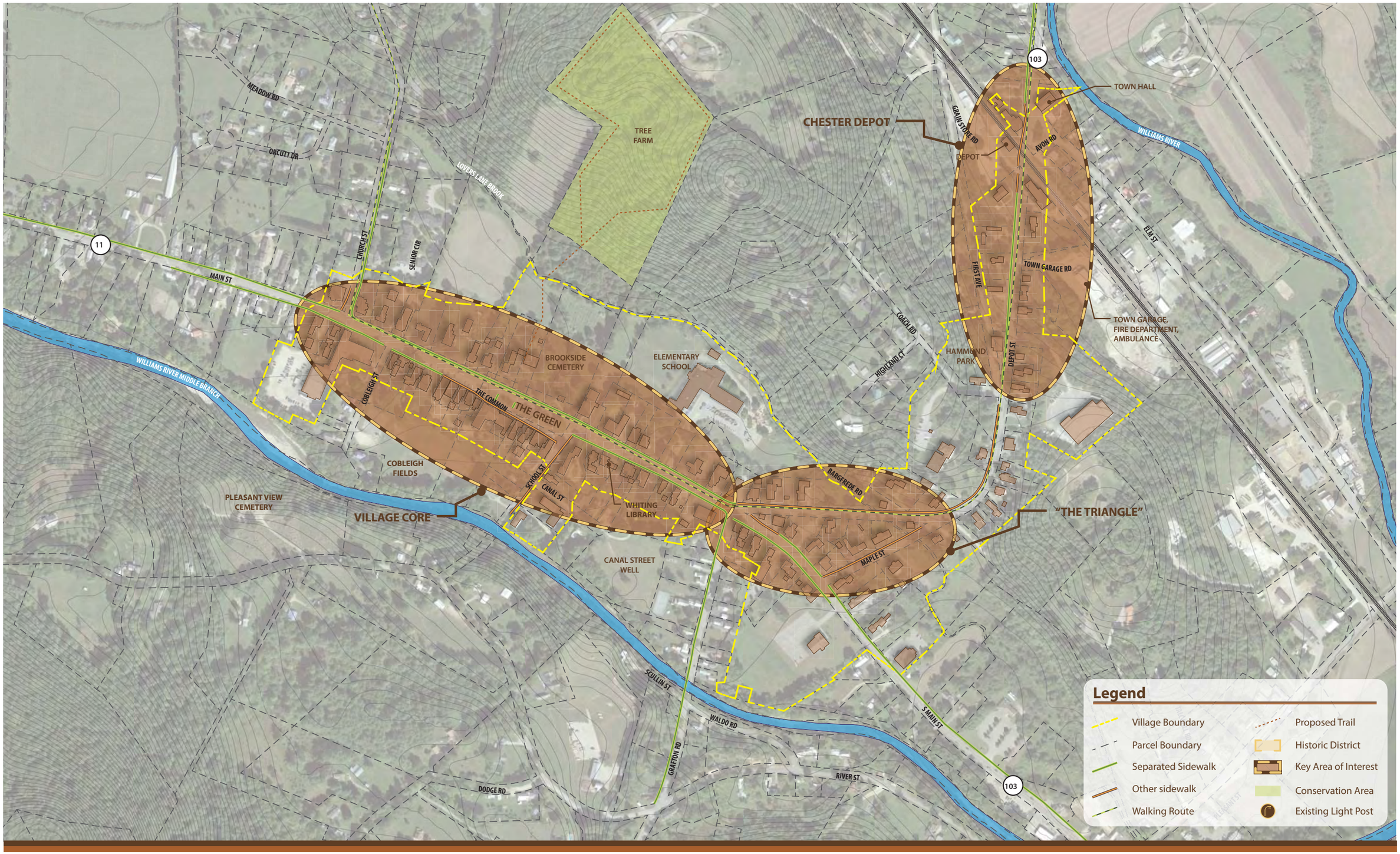

Figure 5: AREAS OF FOCUS MAP

Rediscovering Chester

A Master Plan For Chester Village Center | Figure 5: AREAS OF FOCUS MAP

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Figure 6A: VILLAGE CORE FOCUS AREA MAP

Rediscovering Chester

A Master Plan For Chester Village Center | Figure 6A: VILLAGE CORE FOCUS AREA MAP

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Figure 6B: TRIANGLE FOCUS AREA MAP

Rediscovering Chester

A Master Plan For Chester Village Center | Figure 6B: TRIANGLE FOCUS AREA MAP

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Figure 6C: CHESTER DEPOT FOCUS AREA MAP

Rediscovering Chester

A Master Plan For Chester Village Center | Figure 6C: CHESTER DEPOT FOCUS AREA MAP

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Figure 7A: VILLAGE CORE STREET VIEW PHOTOS

Figure 7B: TRIANGLE FOCUS AREA STREET VIEW PHOTOS

Figure 7C: CHESTER DEPOT STREET VIEW PHOTOS

Chapter Four: Defining Opportunities

KEY THEMES

Throughout the development of the plan foundation and the community engagement process important "themes" kept emerging related to strengthening and improving vibrancy in the Village Center:

- Arts
- Business and Tourism
- Historic Resources and Character
- Land Use and Design
- Recreation
- Transportation and Mobility
- Wayfinding and Gateways

To help assure these themes were fully integrated into the development of opportunities, SE Group drafted "Opportunity Statements" that were shared with the Steering Committee and Community (at the December Community Vision Workshop event).

These statements were intended to provide some context to each of these themes and help guide the exploration of ideas and opportunities.

An icon was designated for each "theme," which was then used in the "Opportunities and Challenges" analysis discussion.

Arts

ART IS A VALUED PART OF THE COMMUNITY, BUT NOT ALWAYS VISIBLE OR CELEBRATED

Business and Tourism

WHILE NOT A TRADITIONAL TOURIST TOWN, CHESTER SITS WITHIN A BROADER REGION WITH SIGNIFICANT VISITOR-BASED ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND HAS A SET OF UNIQUE QUALITIES THAT, WITH THE RIGHT EMPHASIS AND SUPPORT STRUCTURE, COULD INCREASE LOCAL VISITOR-BASED ECONOMIC VITALITY

History Resources and Character

THE HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF CHESTER IS SOMETHING BROADLY RECOGNIZED AS IMPORTANT AND A WORTHY ASSET ON WHICH TO BUILD GREATER CONNECTIONS BETWEEN RESIDENTS AND WITH VISITORS

Land Use and Design

DESIGN AND LAND USE POLICIES CAN BE ENCOURAGED TO IMPROVE UPON WHAT EXISTS TODAY WITHIN THE VILLAGE CENTER IN WAYS THAT BRING ITS VARIOUS PARTS TOGETHER

Recreation

RECREATION IS A VALUED COMMUNITY ATTRIBUTE AND THE CONNECTION TO RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES CAN BE IMPROVED WITHIN AND FROM THE VILLAGE CENTER

Transportation and Mobility

WHILE HIGHLY WALKABLE, THE FLOW OF PEDESTRIANS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY COULD BE ENHANCED TO IMPROVE SAFETY AND MOBILITY. TRAFFIC VOLUMES WITHIN THE STATE HIGHWAYS ARE BOTH ARE A SOURCE OF CHALLENGE AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENHANCE LOCAL ECONOMIC VITALITY

Wayfinding/Gateways

ESTABLISHING STRONGER GATEWAYS INTO AND WAYFINDING WITHIN THE VILLAGE CENTER CAN IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE OF CHESTER FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

As noted in Chapter Three, the Village Center was broken down into three major areas of focus (Village Core, the Triangle, and Chester Depot). In addition, this planning process also considered the "Big Picture" to better understand the relationship of the Village Center with the broader community.

Each of these focus areas has inherent challenges and issues as well as opportunities. Through the background data collection and community engagement process opportunities and challenges for each area of focus were explored. Each is described in this section.

Overall Village Center Opportunities

As depicted on **Figure 8**, opportunities exist within the overall Village Center to address all the themes. Important overall opportunities include:

- Promoting or establishing connections between the Village Center and its surroundings including access to the river and public lands above Brookside Cemetery.
- Determining the right wayfinding strategy for Chester Village is another key opportunity; defining the arrival points into the village and providing the necessary messaging to guide people around.
- Developing signage that "fits" with the character of Chester Village and supports the wayfinding system.
- Connecting key destinations within the Village Center was also identified. Connecting Chester Depot to the Village Core through walks and for bicycling can enhance the sense of place.
- Improving roadside walking from the Village Center.
- Aligning local land use, zoning and development policy to better support the preservation of historic resources.
- Identifying and communicating where local businesses are located and actively promoting them to enhance economic activity.
- Promoting improvement that encourage "lingering" for residents and visitors to the Village Center.
- Supporting community capacity and collaboration to advance important objectives, support events and activities and continue progress that the vision establishes.
- Exploring ways to promote community art and artists within the public realm to increase awareness.

Village Core Opportunities

As depicted on **Figure 9**, opportunities exist within the overall Village Core to address all the themes. Important overall opportunities include:

- Improving the pedestrian connections within the Village Core across Main Street and to the River.
- Enhancing the pedestrian experience through streetscape improvements, beautification and other techniques.
- Establishing and connecting potential parking at Cobleigh Fields to the core (i.e., The Common) to support its use for visitors and/or during events.
- Connecting the Green and Common in ways that preserve important historic characteristic, but help assure the movement of people is safe.
- Communicating the historic character through interpretive signage or other elements to add to the human experience and support local business activity.
- Improving facilities for bicycles within the Village Core.
- Promoting access to adjacent open spaces and parks (Brookside Cemetery, Elementary School, Tree Farm parcel, Cobleigh Fields).
- Supporting land use policies that balance preservation of historic character and the continued use and vitality of historic structures.

Triangle Opportunities

As depicted on **Figure 10**, opportunities exist within the overall Triangle to address all the themes. Important overall opportunities include:

- Enhancing the streetscape along Depot Street to encourage visitors to come to the Core and to improve the connectedness of all parts of the Village Center.
- Determining the importance of the former Jiffy Mart lot and VTICA sites as potential civic space, commercial reuse and/or study how they might evolve in the future to best support the overall vision.
- Considering design parameters for buildings, roadways, and streetscapes.
- Establishing a welcoming design into the Village Core.
- Enhancing pedestrian crossing of Depot Street at its intersection with Main Street.

Chester Depot Opportunities

As depicted on **Figure 11**, opportunities exist within the overall Triangle to address all the themes. Important overall opportunities include:

- Creating an arrival point at the northern end of the Village Center
- Enhancing the pedestrian and bicycle experience along Depot Street to encourage connect to the Village Core.
- Enhancing the pedestrian experience at the Depot and surrounding area to encourage walking, organize space and encourage more economic activity.
- Supporting land use policies that can encourage consolidation of curb cuts, façade or building upgrades and enhancement of the road edge to improve the aesthetics of the area.

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Land Use and Design

- Addressing reuse of the "Jiffy Mart" site and VTICA site – re-imagining the intersection of Depot Street and Main Street
- Identifying intersections between art, culture, history and design outcomes
- Evaluating existing land use policies in light of other objectives (historic preservation, reuse, mobility, public art, events, etc.)
- Explore exterior lighting and streetscape elements consistent with the community vision

Historic Resources and Character

- Addressing the adaptive reuse of existing historic structures within the designated village center
- Addressing the distinction between historic districts while finding ways to unify the experience
- Aligning land use policy with historic resource considerations
- Communicating the history of Chester - taking the time to resolve the community narrative about history and heritage
- Engaging a wide range of constituencies into the discussion
- How can history guide specific design outcomes?

Transportation and Mobility

- Addressing vehicular circulation within the core and the "triangle"
- Dealing with the form and quality of existing sidewalks
- Managing the need for parking for retail and event use – adequacy of parking, location of parking
- Improving safety for roadside walking
- Addressing bicycle use within the village (paths, bike parking, etc.)
- Addressing cross-walks and or lack of cross-walks (Depot Street)
- Connecting key destinations / Schools, civic uses, The Common

Wayfinding

- Promoting a hierarchy of signage that establishes and/or reinforces an image of the community and addresses the varying needs for signage (Directional, informational, etc.)
- Addressing signage related to community assets and resources; history, arts, recreation

Gateway

- Determining the "Gateway" strategy for Chester? Where are key arrival points located and what do they communicate?
  - Route 103 / Route 11 East
  - Main + Route 103 North
  - Route 103 South - Before Stone Village / After Stone Village?

Recreation

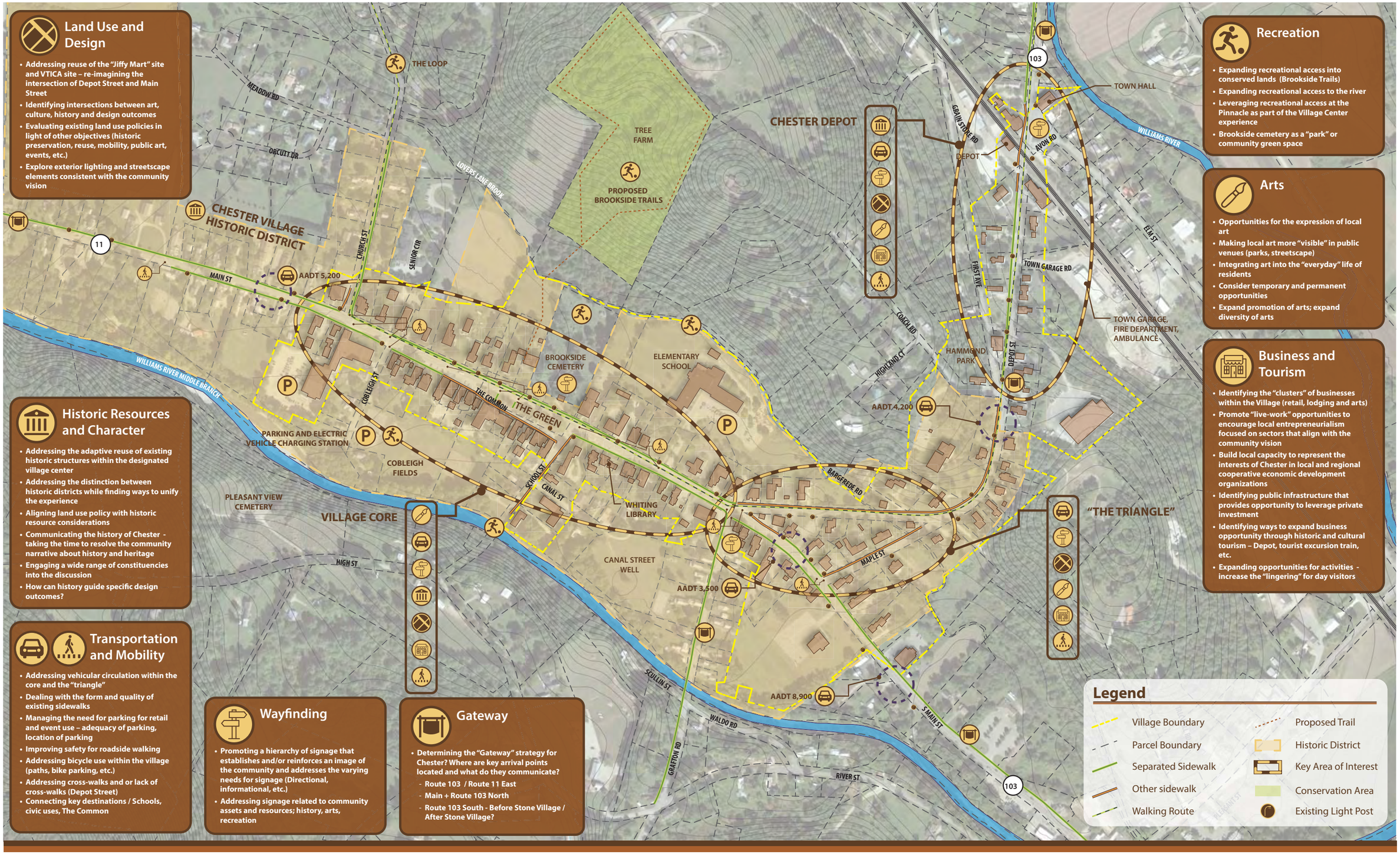
- Expanding recreational access into conserved lands (Brookside Trails)
- Expanding recreational access to the river
- Leveraging recreational access at the Pinnacle as part of the Village Center experience
- Brookside cemetery as a "park" or community green space

Arts

- Opportunities for the expression of local art
- Making local art more "visible" in public venues (parks, streetscape)
- Integrating art into the "everyday" life of residents
- Consider temporary and permanent opportunities
- Expand promotion of arts; expand diversity of arts

Business and Tourism

- Identifying the "clusters" of businesses within the Village (retail, lodging and arts)
- Promote "live-work" opportunities to encourage local entrepreneurialism focused on sectors that align with the community vision
- Build local capacity to represent the interests of Chester in local and regional cooperative economic development organizations
- Identifying public infrastructure that provides opportunity to leverage private investment
- Identifying ways to expand business opportunity through historic and cultural tourism – Depot, tourist excursion train, etc.
- Expanding opportunities for activities - increase the "lingering" for day visitors



Legend

- Village Boundary
- Parcel Boundary
- Separated Sidewalk
- Other sidewalk
- Walking Route
- Proposed Trail
- Historic District
- Key Area of Interest
- Conservation Area
- Existing Light Post

Figure 8: VILLAGE CENTER OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES MAP

Rediscovering Chester

A Master Plan For Chester Village Center | Figure 8: VILLAGE CENTER OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES MAP

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VILLAGE CORE

Land Use and Design

- Addressing reuse of the "Jiffy Mart" site and VTICA site – re-imagining the intersection of Depot Street and Main Street
- Identifying intersections between art, culture, history and design outcomes
- Evaluating existing land use policies in light of other objectives (historic preservation, reuse, mobility, public art, events, etc.)
- Explore exterior lighting and streetscape elements consistent with the community vision

Historic Resources and Character

- Addressing the adaptive reuse of existing historic structures within the designated village center
- Addressing the distinction between historic districts while finding ways to unify the experience
- Aligning land use policy with historic resource considerations
- Communicating the history of Chester - taking the time to resolve the community narrative about history and heritage
- Engaging a wide range of constituencies into the discussion
- How can history guide specific design outcomes?

Transportation and Mobility

- Addressing vehicular circulation within the core and the "triangle"
- Dealing with the form and quality of existing sidewalks
- Managing the need for parking for retail and event use – adequacy of parking, location of parking
- Improving safety for roadside walking
- Addressing bicycle use within the village (paths, bike parking, etc.)
- Addressing cross-walks and or lack of cross-walks (Depot Street)
- Connecting key destinations / Schools, civic uses, The Common

Wayfinding

- Promoting a hierarchy of signage that establishes and/or reinforces an image of the community and addresses the varying needs for signage (Directional, informational, etc.)
- Addressing signage related to community assets and resources; history, arts, recreation

Gateway

- Determining the "Gateway" strategy for Chester? Where are key arrival points located and what do they communicate?
  - Route 103 / Route 11 East
  - Main + Route 103 North
  - Route 103 South - Before Stone Village / After Stone Village?

Recreation

- Expanding recreational access into conserved lands (Brookside Trails)
- Expanding recreational access to the river
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- Expand promotion of arts; expand diversity of arts

Business and Tourism

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- Identifying ways to expand business opportunity through historic and cultural tourism – Depot, tourist excursion train, etc.
- Expanding opportunities for activities - increase the "lingering" for day visitors

Figure 9A: VILLAGE CORE OPPORTUNITIES

Rediscovering Chester

A Master Plan For Chester Village Center | Figure 9A: VILLAGE CORE OPPORTUNITIES

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- Expanding opportunities for activities - increase the "lingering" for day visitors

Legend

- Village Boundary
- Parcel Boundary
- Separated Sidewalk
- Other sidewalk
- Proposed Trail
- Conservation Area
- Existing Light Post
- Existing Crosswalk

Figure 9B: TRIANGLE OPPORTUNITIES

Rediscovering Chester

A Master Plan For Chester Village Center | Figure 9B: TRIANGLE OPPORTUNITIES

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CHESTER DEPOT

Historic Resources and Character

- Addressing the adaptive reuse of existing historic structures within the designated village center
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- Communicating the history of Chester - taking the time to resolve the community narrative about history and heritage
- Engaging a wide range of constituencies into the discussion
- How can history guide specific design outcomes?

Transportation and Mobility

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- Improving safety for roadside walking
- Addressing bicycle use within the village (paths, bike parking, etc.)
- Addressing cross-walks and or lack of cross-walks (Depot Street)
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Land Use and Design

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HIGHLAND CT
COACH RD
MAPLE ST
FIRST AVE
HAMMOND PARK
GRAIN STORE RD
DEPOT
AVON RD
TOWN HALL
TOWN GARAGE RD
ELM ST
TOWN GARAGE, FIRE DEPARTMENT, AMBULANCE
103
11

Legend

- Village Boundary
- Parcel Boundary
- Separated Sidewalk
- Other sidewalk
- Proposed Trail
- Conservation Area
- Existing Light Post
- Existing Crosswalk

Figure 9C: CHESTER DEPOT OPPORTUNITIES

Rediscovering Chester

A Master Plan For Chester Village Center | Figure 9C: CHESTER DEPOT OPPORTUNITES

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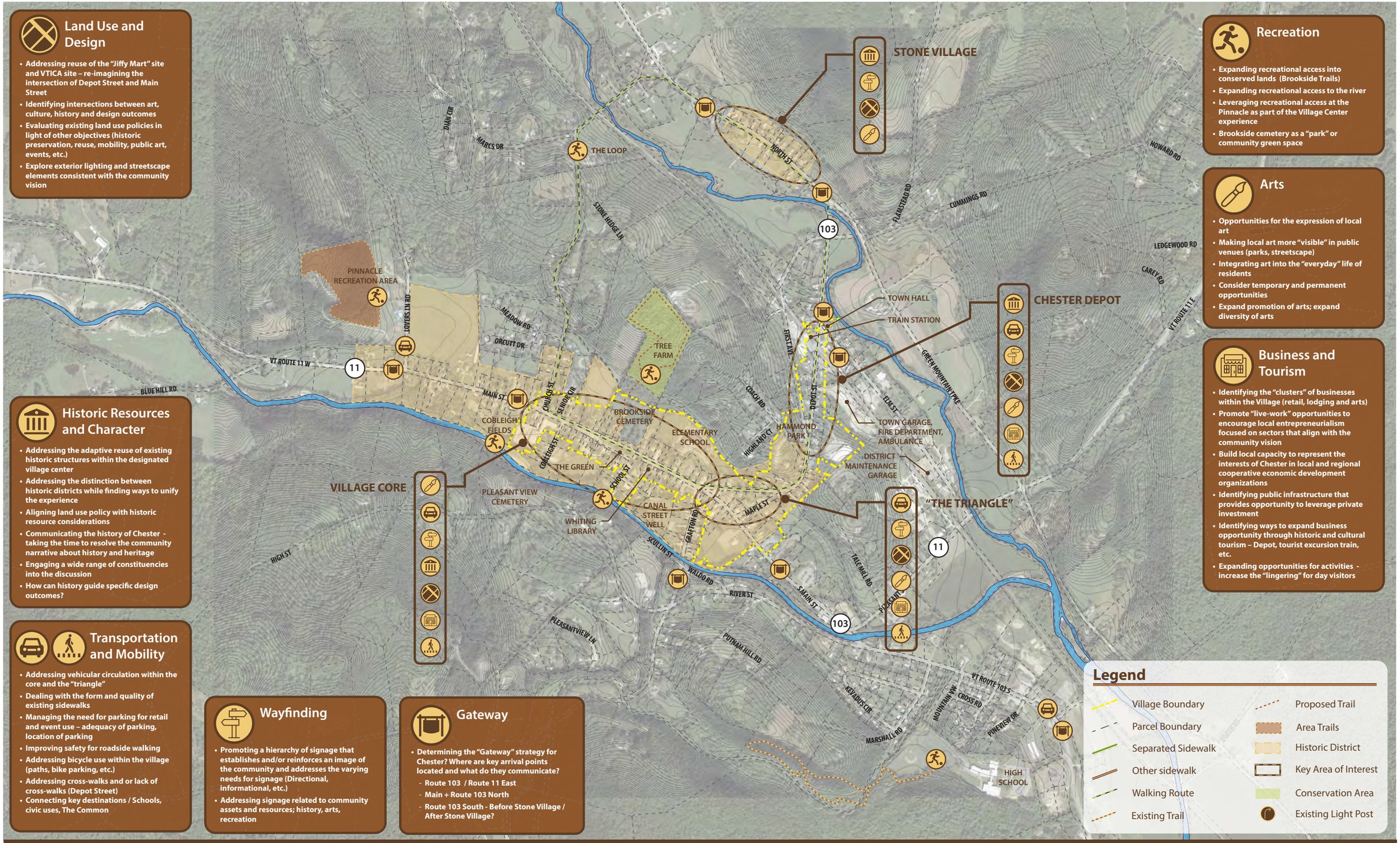

Legend

- Village Boundary
- Parcel Boundary
- Separated Sidewalk
- Other sidewalk
- Walking Route
- Existing Trail
- Proposed Trail
- Area Trails
- Historic District
- Key Area of Interest
- Conservation Area
- Existing Light Post

Rediscovering Chester

A Master Plan For Chester Village Center | Figure 10: REGIONAL ("BIG PICTURE") OPPORTUNITIES MAP

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Figure 10: REGIONAL ("BIG PICTURE") OPPORTUNITIES MAP

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Chapter Five: Establishing a Vision

WHAT IS A VISION?

The Vision is perhaps the most important aspect of any long-range community plan. The Vision influences the policies and approaches the community will take towards future land use and community design. It is the Vision that acknowledges what is important to the community and the measure against which future actions can be evaluated. It is the Vision that speaks to the unity of the community towards planning for the future and meeting the challenges ahead.

VISION FRAMEWORK

As described in Chapters 3 and 4, it has been the key themes that emerged through this master planning process for the Village Center that underpin how the community looks towards its future.

Based on community input and the consideration of the numerous opportunities, a one-sentence vision statement has been drafted for each of these themes, describing how they inform the Village Center Master Plan. Together they form the framework on which the Vision rests.

Each of themes are discussed in alphabetical order and not based on priority or importance. Word Cloud graphics taken from the community input process are included following each statement to highlight how that input informed it.

Arts

STATEMENT: *Celebrate the arts, architecture, and culture as integral facets of community life that are present and visible throughout Chester Village Center.*

DISCUSSION: As described in Chapters 3 and 4, "art" within Chester has been identified as both a valuable resource (i.e., lots of artists and artistic endeavors) and something the community has not done as good a job at promoting or recognizing. During the engagement process many residents acknowledged that art comes in many forms and it's important to think broadly when defining what art is.

Art in Chester should consider the local architecture. Expressing art in a thoughtful and purposeful way would benefit long-time residents and those who might choose to visit.

Business and Tourism

STATEMENT: *Support businesses that cater to a diverse market through policies which build consensus and which strengthens community efforts to enhance the overall experience within Chester Village Center. These policies should improve both the economic viability and visibility of local businesses.*

DISCUSSION: While Chester is certainly influenced by the regional tourism economy, Town residents are not interested in Chester being a "tourist" town. Better communication of local businesses through digital/media/print and efforts to enhance their visibility to those who might be traveling to Chester should be done with full consideration of the benefits to town residents. Supporting diverse businesses that have local appeal is important. Strengthening ties between private business interests and the community on specific projects could enhance opportunities for physical improvements and support local economic development efforts.

Historic Resources and Character

STATEMENT: *Preserve, protect, and enhance the exceptional historic resources and rich character of Chester Village Center; recognizing its history and culture as defining elements of the community's identity.*

DISCUSSION: The historic resources and character of Chester Village Center paints a wonderful story that is not well told. The hard work of preserving these resources is a shared responsibility; property owners, the Town, and the residents at large can all contribute to these efforts. Establishing better mechanisms to support preservation of historic resources can help the efforts of various community groups and attract outside resources.

Making Chester's historic resources and character a centerpiece of its identity and message may help strengthen community alignment and provide a unique way of differentiating the community.

Land Use and Design

STATEMENT: *Land Use and Community Design should reflect the unique qualities found within the Chester Village Center incorporating continuity and connectivity.*

DISCUSSION: Both historically and culturally, Chester Village Center is made up of "parts." These subareas (Chester Depot, Upper Depot Street, Triangle, Village Core) have unique challenges and opportunities that should be considered as plans more forward. It is also possible to find ways to unify these subareas together and by doing so assure that the Village Center's overall vision is presented.

When reviewing existing zoning regulations and Town policies covering the overall Village Center, the Town may want to establish common design parameters, but support some flexibility to allow each area to have its own design expression. Design elements such as wayfinding, lighting and streetscape features might provide an appropriate starting point to help unify the overall Village Center experience.

Recreation

STATEMENT: *Maintain, expand, and connect recreational opportunities within and from Chester Village Center, thereby improving the quality of life.*

DISCUSSION: Throughout the public engagement process the value of recreation was highly praised by the community. The existing "walking loops," Pinnacle, Brookside Cemetery, Green, etc. are recreational features that the community values and that have strong connection to the Village Center.

The primary objective for the Master Plan is to improve access from the Village Center to the broader recreational assets of the community. Through development of physical connections (new trails, linkages), enhancement of wayfinding and awareness and by promoting such linkages within overall town planning objectives, the importance of the Village Center as a hub for local recreational activities can be enhanced. Additionally, these recreational linkages and improvements may also enhance and expand the visitor experience by adding to the opportunities for "something to do" while visiting, which will promote longer stays and additional spending in Chester businesses.

Transportation and Mobility

STATEMENT: *Provide safe and convenient travel through Chester Village Center for all modes of travel, for the enhancement of the community's objectives.*

DISCUSSION: At the onset in this master planning process the community conversation veered towards the challenge of having a village defined by a major state highway (Route 103). For some, the fact that Route 103 does not enter the village core represents a lost opportunity for greater business activity. For others, the separation assures that large trucks do not enter the village core, creating conflicts to peace and tranquility and historic character.

Through the public engagement process, the issues of transportation and mobility had several facets to it. First, the community recognized that mobility is something that needs to move beyond the automobile. Past investments in new or improved sidewalks were a start, but further improving pedestrian movement is important. Adding greater opportunities for bicycle use within the Village Center also adds to the quality of life for residents and may have value for the local economy.

Second, the community recognized that while Route 103 does not enter the village core, it does connect the Village Center to the region and its enhancement can improve prospects for local businesses and local interests. Finding ways to enhance the awareness of the travelling public must be done without changing the circulation system so that the local use of the roads is not compromised.

Lastly, the community recognized that transportation projects can often be a catalyst to greater outcomes. Through improvements to mobility, ideas on appropriate land uses, new recreational opportunities and ways to promote art, history, and culture can be explored.

Wayfinding/Gateways

STATEMENT: *Create signage of appropriate design in the Village Center that communicates the identity of Chester while welcoming both locals and visitors and enhance their understanding and experience of the community.*

DISCUSSION: The community recognized early in the development of this master plan that better signage and wayfinding might be an important part of the vision. As many have noted, the current system lacks both in breadth (where signs are location, what role they provide) and visual cohesion (styles vary wildly and dominated by the presence of VTrans signs).

Through the public process the ideas around signage were expansive as is to be expected. *What logo to use? What is the form the sign should take? What colors, typefaces, messages?* These are all welcome questions to the opportunity to craft a cohesive community identity. More importantly, however, is the broader community need for a clearer understanding of its identity.

A good wayfinding system not only visually communicate the essence of a place, but help connect its part together. As many have observed, Chester has tremendous community assets (beautiful and historic building, great parks, wonderful mature trees, vibrant local business) but not a unified system to discover them. Focusing efforts on better understanding these assets, how they can work together and how to create a system to communicate them that might be a valuable effort to build a stronger and more aligned community.

Chapter Six: Exploring the Vision

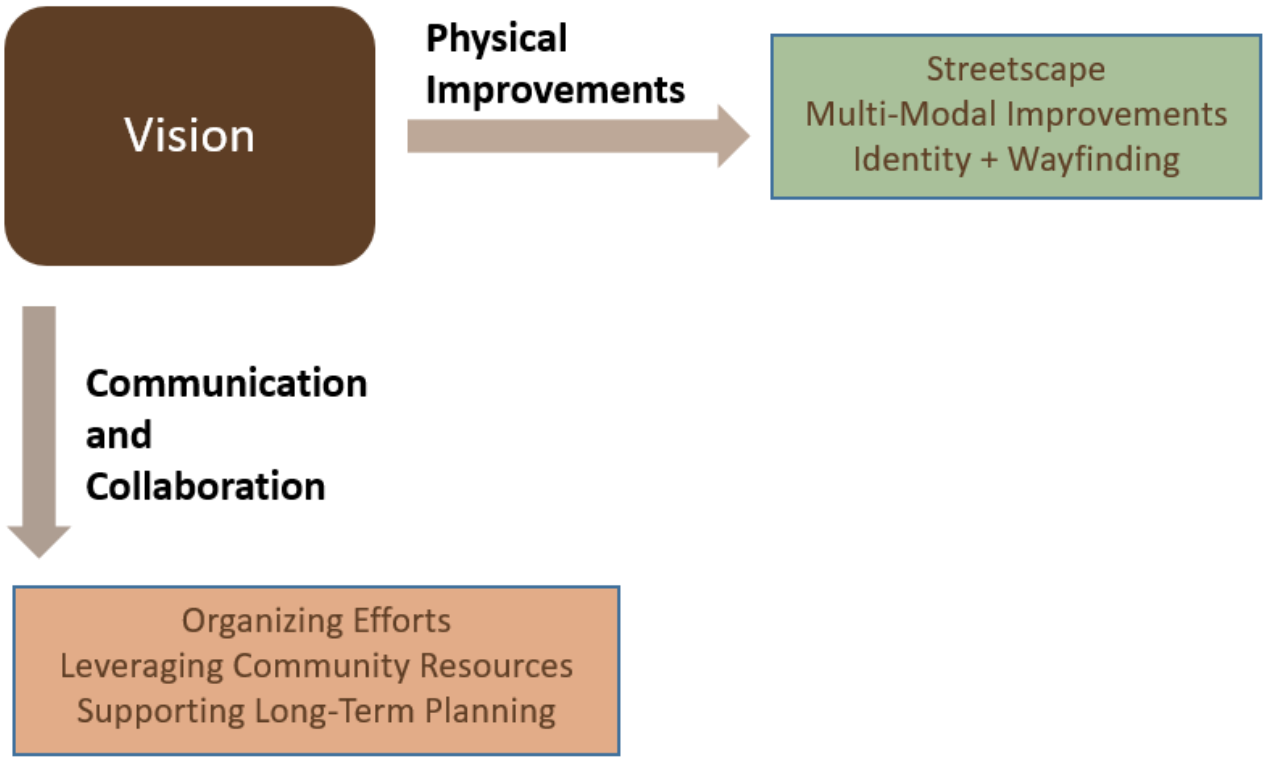
INTRODUCTION

As described in Chapter Five, the Vision Framework provides the underpinnings for the Vision expressed in this Master Plan. This chapter explores how this Vision could be supported through a series of recommended physical improvements and strategies for enhancing communication, collaboration, and capacity within the community. Both are integral to the ultimate success of this Master Plan and reflect the ideas and opportunities identified by the Steering Committee, Chester residents, and other stakeholders.

This Master Plan is titled "Rediscovering Chester" for a reason. The intent behind the recommendations in this master plan is not to create a new wholly community or identity, but rather to build upon the strengths and rich history in the Village. Recommendations in this Master Plan are aspirational in how they envision the future of the Village Center, but remain respectful of the past, and are firmly grounded in what is reasonably possible for the community. They include a mix of both "low hanging fruit" and longer-term projects that serve to enhance vibrancy in the Village Center.

While some recommendations could be implemented with little or no additional planning, it is important to note that additional planning and design may be required prior to implementation of many projects. Proposed physical improvements are conceptual in nature and only meant to demonstrate the need to provide a particular experience, connection, or amenity. For example, the "parklet" suggested for School Street includes seating, wayfinding, and public art components, but the concept utilizes generic representations for a seating wall, a signage kiosk, and the public art.

Detailed design and construction documents that would indicate specific materials and specifications are not within the broad scope of this Master Plan and will need to be completed prior to implementation. The Town should continue to engage the public through an open planning and design process wherever possible.



PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

Throughout the public engagement process, ideas about making physical changes to the Village Center were discussed and described. While many participants in the process felt strongly that much of what Chester has is a solid foundation, many also felt that improving the look and feel of the Village Center could be beneficial to improve civic pride, support local business and perhaps to make moving around in Chester better, safer and more interesting. Additionally, while portions of the Village Center are blessed with beautiful and relatively intact historic architecture, other areas had seen some signs of neglect and might benefit from "beautification."

The recommended physical improvements have been "broken down" into some component parts to help better communicate them and describe how they support the vision. Each of these parts are discussed in the following section and supported by graphic plans at the end of this chapter.

Wayfinding

Purpose of Wayfinding

Wayfinding is not the same as signage. Many communities, including Chester, have signs that help direct people (or more often cars) to important destinations. Signage can help communicate information (*where, how far, what*) and can help visually reinforce a community's identity.

Wayfinding, on the other hand, is a broader term that brings together signage with other elements (streetscape, key architects, landmarks, etc.) to help users gain a stronger sense of where they are and how they move about. Wayfinding is a "system" not a sign.

An important part of any wayfinding is establishing clear and welcoming arrival points. For the Village Center, this will be very important to delineate the village itself relative to the transitional land uses around. Wayfinding can also serve to underscore walkability and scale, after all, the Village Center extends for only 1 mile from Church Street to the Town Offices along Depot Street.

Additionally, wayfinding can help support a community's sense of identity and often reflects important values and characteristics central to this sense of identity. Through an appropriate design process, wayfinding can establish a hierarchy of signage that function as aids to navigation and evoke community identity.

Physical Improvements Considered but Eliminated

- Changing the circulation along Depot Street and Maple Street to be one-way.
- Expanding roadway curb edges or significant changes to road geometry.
- Adding new street trees in areas dominated by existing, mature, and inventoried trees.

Important Signage Locations

As previously noted, the welcoming into Chester at present either happens closer to the town boundary or relies upon standard VTrans signage. This existing signage does not appropriately reinforce the boundaries of the Village Center nor does it communicate a community-centric design. It should be noted that State standards for signage can greatly limit design flexibility for route signage. Greater flexibility exists at the municipal level for pedestrian signage.

As noted on **Figure 11A**, there are several locations within the Village Center that function as "gateways." It is important to recognize that defining the gateway into a community is not simply creating a single element at the recognized arrival point. Rather, gateways should reflect multiple access points and be scaled/designed to reflect different arrival patterns and modalities. The important informational message for these gateway signs is that people have "arrived" at Chester Village. As will be discussed later, bolstering that signage with other physical improvements helps reinforce that arrival.

Key gateway locations include:

- East of the Village Center, along Main Street
- West of the Village Center
- On Grafton Road, south of the river
- On Depot Street, north of the intersection with Elm Street

Signage at these key gateways would be supported by a secondary level of wayfinding signage to further direct vehicular and pedestrian movement. In these locations, the focus would be about aiding navigation to key destination points (the Common, the Green, Brookside Cemetery, School, etc.). Signage systems should address both vehicular and pedestrian scales. Key areas for this level of wayfinding include:

- At the north end of the Green, at the Common
- At the south end of the Green, at the Common
- Near the intersection of Main Street and Depot Street (i.e., near Jiffy Mart)
- Slightly east of the intersection of Main Street and Maple Street
- On Depot Street, north of its intersection with Maple Street
- Near the intersection of Depot Street and First Avenue/Coach Road
- Along Elm Street, just east of its intersection with Depot Street

It is also important in any wayfinding system to place signage at the destination point. Helping users know when they have arrived is critical. For example, directing someone in Chester to the Green might seem easy, but how would someone know they have arrived? Again, a good wayfinding system does not only rely on "signs" and often the destination points can be communicated through a combination of elements (a sign, some artwork, a bench, lighting, etc.)

Wayfinding Design

Establishing the right design for a wayfinding system is, in and of itself, a major undertaking. This process requires a community to often look inward to better understand what attributes they value and then explore (through graphic design) how those attributes might take form. Residents will have lots of suggestions and ideas and should be engaged in this process.

During this master planning process, many ideas signage were expressed. While the scope of this work was not to develop the wayfinding or signage system, the insights gleaned from the conversations and ideas about signage are potentially helpful to inform future consideration of wayfinding.

Graphic illustrations on signage forms, colors, styles and the use of a civic-minded logo have been explored as part of this process.

Expressing Community Values through Signage Design (Chester- Vermont Logo courtesy of the Chester Telegraph)

Recreation and Connectivity

While the primary purpose of this master plan was to explore ideas within the designated village center, the process has always considered the importance of connectivity to and from the Village Center.

As observed during the community survey and focus group discussions, the importance of recreation to the residents of Chester is high. For some, recreation is the ability for casual walks along Church Street (i.e., the "Loop") while for others it's the ability to access the recreational activities at the Pinnacle Recreation Area.

Supporting walking within the "Loop" and elsewhere is important to residents of Chester. Church Street, a critical segment in the passive walking loop, has significant challenges to safety; it is steep, has curves, has drainage ditches and has a very narrow right-of-way. Past efforts to address pedestrian access along Church Street have encountered those issues with no good solution.

While it is likely that people will continue to walk along Church Street, during this master planning process several other ideas emerged to help diversity the walking and recreational options. These are identified graphically on **Figure 11B**.

- **Creating a link between Depot Street and the future trails on town land uphill of Brookside Cemetery ("Tree Farm").** The Town has acquired land just north of the Brookside Cemetery and has prepared preliminary studies for new trails. Linking these trails via new connections down to First Avenue and ultimately to Depot Street would provide another route. Keeping these trails open for traditional pedestrian use during winter months would be challenging, but they might serve a good location for snowshoeing, Nordic skiing and/or fat biking.
- **Supporting the development of sidewalks along Route 103 to the High School.** The long-range planning for the Town has considered expansion of sidewalks along Route 103 from Depot/Main Street to the High School. Bridge work along Route 103 has been done in the past that supports the inclusion of a sidewalk along the north side of Route 103. This linkage could serve several functions; supporting a "safe routes to school" for kids living in the Village Center, supporting recreational access to the existing trails west of the High School and linking the residential neighborhoods around the High School to the Village Center and the Pinnacle Recreation Area.
- **Exploring a walking route along Dodge Road and High Street.** Heading south along School Street you reach the existing pedestrian bridge. Based on existing parcel mapping, this bridge and the land connecting to it from both School Street and High Street, is public right-of-way. It may be possible to create a link between School Street and High Street to provide recreational walking access to a new loop. While High Street and Dodge Road do not have sidewalks, nor likely will, they are very low volume, locally-serving roads where roadside walking would be appropriate. Roadside signs indicating "walking route" could be considered to help strengthen awareness of walkers.
- **Improving walking on the "Loop."** The northern walking loop along Church Street to Route 103 (near Stone Village) and back sees wide usage and challenging site conditions. It is locally posted at 25 mph and has one sign indicating pedestrian use (near the Church Street/Main Street intersection). While geometric changes to the roadway or the development of sidewalks or paths within the public right-of-way are not likely, better striping of the roadway, more frequent signage and public education of the route can help.

Improving Pedestrian Accommodations along Rural Roads

Supporting pedestrian use of rural roads can be very challenging. The Federal Highway Administration (FWA) suggests a "yield road" in circumstances where speeds are less than 30 mph (ideally 20 mph), where bidirectional traffic is supported and it is mostly locally-serving.

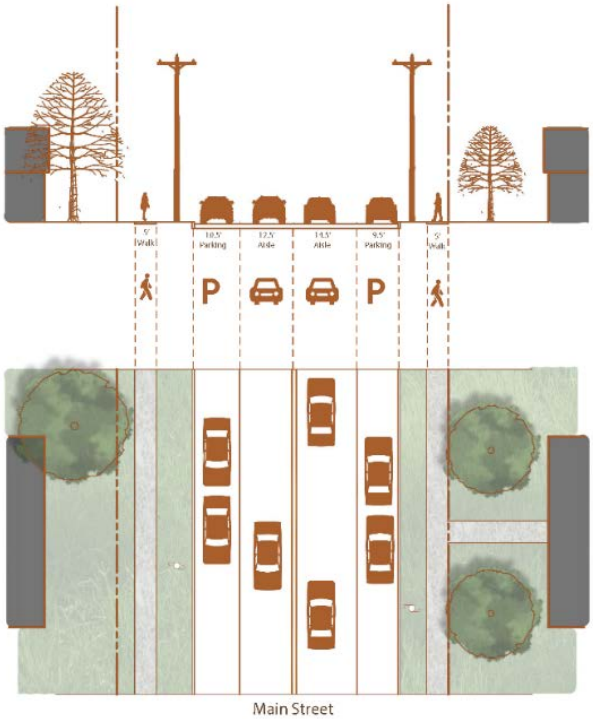
In these circumstances, the concept of the yield road relies on several solutions:

- No striping of the center lane – by removal of the center line it supports a more low-speed operation. Striping along curves might be needed for safety.
- Inclusion of signage – standard warning signs (W11-2, W1-2) can help inform users of the shared nature of the roadway. These signs could be combined with a custom "ON ROADWAY" sign (FWA 2016).

Creating a Sidepath and Promenade

Along the north side of Main Street from Church Street east towards its intersection with Depot Street (about 1,300 feet in length) an existing 5-foot-wide concrete sidewalk is found. At present, this walk provides good pedestrian access long this portion of Main Street and helps connect residents and visitors to significant historic and civic resources including Brookside Cemetery and the elementary school. This segment also extends along the part of Main Street where on street parking is allowed.

This is shown in the following cross-section:



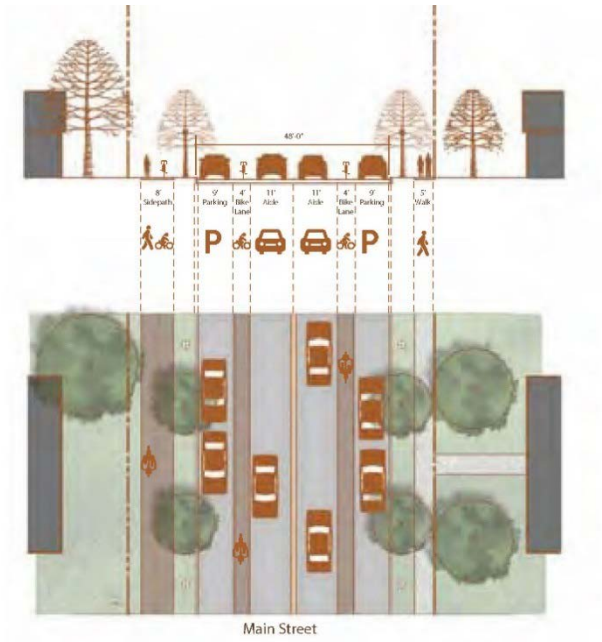
Existing Cross-section, Main Street near School

During the public process, many residents expressed concern about the use of the existing sidewalk for bicycles. Some noted that because of the parking, some use it for biking and its width is inadequate. The fact that it serves the school likely exacerbates this.

Based on this reality, the recommendation is to widen the existing sidewalk to 8 feet to allow for shared use of the walkway for both pedestrians and bicyclists. This "sidepath" option would help bicyclists bypass the parking areas along the north side of Main Street. Based on existing right-of-way information, widening of the sidewalk would not likely require additional land, but may impact some of the trees. Whether the widening happens towards the travel lane, towards private properties or spit between those choices is something that would need to be further studied. The flexibility in this location is helpful to address future specific design issues. Care will need to be taken to appropriately integrate the sidepath into the existing (or future) on-shoulder bicycle accommodations.

Beyond serving as a safer option for bicycle use along this portion of Main Street, the sidepath also could function as a "promenade." This segment of Main Street has many important historic resources including the visitor center and information kiosk, a more mature tree canopy, and future access to open spaces of the Brookside Trails. Establishing a wide promenade along this stretch could help unify these resources, particularly if coupled with an informational or interpretive element highlighting the historic resources. Through informative signage, "info-bollards" or other elements, the story of Chester could be communicated. The use of this promenade for events (Chester on the Green) could also provide useful to the flow and gathering of people.

The following shows the recommended cross-section:



Recommended Cross-section, Main Street near School Street

Improving the Streetscape

Improving the streetscape within Chester Village has many challenges. As previously noted, the historic character of Chester Village raises the bar on the types of improvements that are appropriate. With the surrounding architecture of such quality and condition, the appropriate treatments to the streetscape need to be done thoughtfully and with great care. Finding the right balance between historic character and modern efficiency and availability will be important.

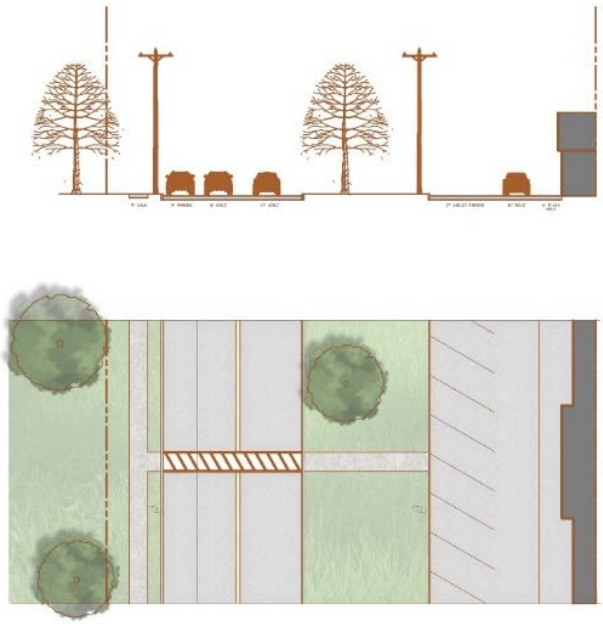
For the purposes of this plan there are three specific treatments for the streetscape that have been recommended: improvements to sidewalks, better pedestrian crosswalks, and the incorporation of pedestrian-scaled exterior lighting. Additionally, elements of streetscape that have been considered include street furniture (benches, trash receptacles, etc.) and bicycle racks. While ideas about the specific design forms abound, the master plan is focused more on the purpose of such elements rather than the specific styles needed. As any specific project moves forward, considerable discussion about the right bench, pedestrian light, etc. will be needed.

It should also be stressed that these improvements are not likely to be done in isolation relative to other changes. If the community moves forward with a portion of the streetscape improvements, the inclusion of new signage and wayfinding will likely be an essential component.

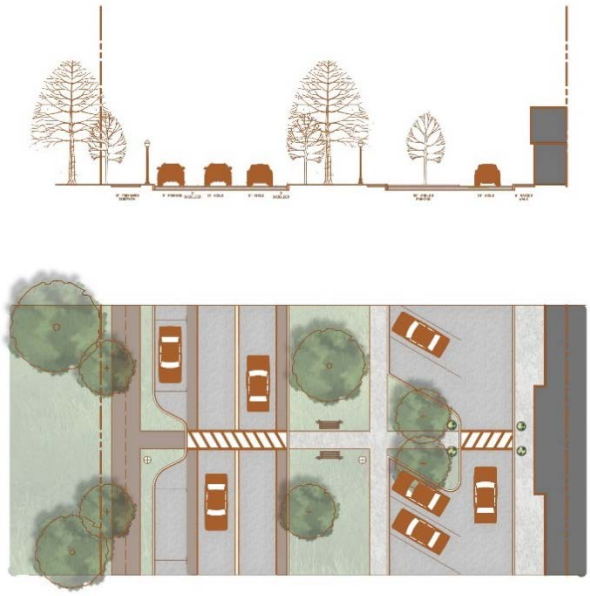
The following detailed elements are identified on **Figure 11D**.

Sidewalks

- **Improving sidewalks along Main Street.** Beyond to the sidepath, the Master Plan also envisions upgrading sidewalks along the entirety of the south side of Main Street (from Church Street to Maple Street). At present, sidewalks do not have consistent curbing (most of which appears to be granite). While sidewalks do, and will continue to, extend out beyond this segment on Main Street, a more complete and visually upgraded set of concrete walks (6 feet in width) in this area would help enhance the pedestrian experience. Overall about 2,650 feet of upgraded sidewalks are anticipated along Main Street.
- **Creating a new sidewalk along the Green adjacent to Common Street.** Pull-in angled parking is currently allowed on both sides of Common Street. For cars parked adjacent to the Green, no sidewalk exists to act as both a physical barrier between the parking zone and the park. The following cross-sections illustrate this condition.



Existing Parking on Common Street adjacent to Green



Recommended section along Main, through Green and Common Street

- **Improving the sidewalk along School Street.** The sidewalk along School Street extending south from Main Street is presently poorly defined and not vertically (no curb) from the travel way. While School Street is a dead-end road with low volume of traffic, the development of a more formal sidewalk (6 feet in width) could be helpful to support community access to the Middle Branch of the Williams River. An associated site-specific improvement at the end of School Street is described later in this Chapter.
- **Upgrading and expanding sidewalks along Depot Street.** Depot Street has many challenges to sidewalks; relatively narrow right-of-way, many existing curb-cuts and it climbs upwards from its intersection with Main Street to the town offices. An existing, narrow sidewalk is located along the west side of Depot Street from Main Street north to just opposite the laundry mat.

  Depot Street appears to have little opportunity for sidewalks on both sides of the street. The existing public right-of-way appears narrow to the east side of Depot Street, making the development of new walks along that segment subject to potential right-of-way acquisition with many individual properties. A new sidewalk along the east side would have a challenging crossing situation as it approached the "Triangle" as the roadway curves and is dropping in grade. Further, during the Vision Workshop, participants in the Depot Street group felt that a sidewalk (6-foot-wide) along the west side was preferred. Additional study on the feasibility of sidewalks (and other streetscape components) on the east side might be worth considering in the long term.
- **Consider a sidewalk along Cobleigh Street or path to Common Street.** The development of parking at Cobleigh Fields could provide a good venue for events and/or support events on Main Street. The Town should evaluate whether a seasonal path through the town property and crossing private lands onto The Common is possible. If such a path provides unworkable due to technical or access issues, consider establishing a sidewalk along the east side of Cobleigh Street to support public access from Main Street.

Crosswalks

Presently, the Village Center has fourteen (14) designated crosswalks (see **Figures 6A–6C**). Along Main Street, two crosswalks connect the north side of the street to the Green. It is these connections where additional improvements are recommended to help better communicate the crossing points and provide physical separation between pedestrians crossing the roadway and vehicles parking along the roadway.

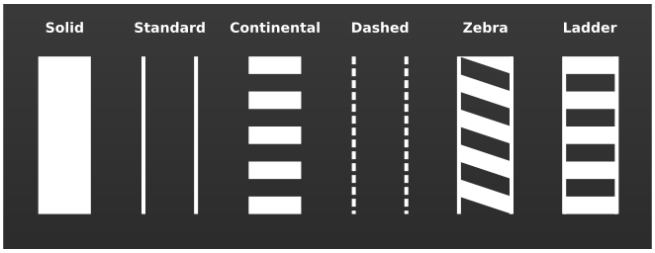
Three types of improvements are recommended:

- **Providing curb-extensions or bulb-outs at critical crossing points.** The use of curb extensions or "bulb-outs" can provide some very real benefits to enhancing the pedestrian crossing experience. Essentially this feature expands the pedestrian space into the roadway by removing some asphalt and replacing with other surface treatments, green space and pedestrian-lighting and signage, to help act as a buffer between cars and people. Curbing or other edging is needed to assure adequate separation. These features also can extend the space where benches and other street furniture go, helping to keep walkways clear. They also reduce the effective crossing distance, which lessens pedestrian crossing times.

Example of "bulb-out"

- **Improving the visibility of crosswalks.** Keeping crosswalk visible is an important part of making sure motorists (and pedestrians) know where they are. While the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) does not conclude a direct link between increased visibility and pedestrian safety, they have concluded that increased visibility has a positive effect on both driver and pedestrian behavior. It is this "awareness" of crossing points that provides some benefit.

  As noted earlier in this plan, there are many styles of crosswalk. Per FHWA guidance, the most visible form of cross-walk includes transverse (directed toward the driver) lines such as the ladder or continental styles. Routine maintenance is vital to assure these features work.



Types of Crosswalks

- **Adding additional pedestrian signage.** At present, many of the crosswalk locations within the Village Center lack permanent reflective signage. Some use of "sandwich board" signs, placed on a temporary basis, was observed during the process. Providing a more consistent demarcation of crosswalks within the Village Center can reinforce the importance of pedestrian mobility, even in advance of expanded streetscape improvements.

Future Considerations

It is also important to consider long-term options for enhancing pedestrian crossings. While an analysis of specific crossing needs was not completed during this master planning process, monitoring the function of existing crosswalks over time and at key locations would help the community understand if additional measures are needed. In some communities, the use of crossing signals and rapid flashing beacons are appropriate. Given the historic character of Chester, some of those options would need careful consideration and review, both from a need perspective (do crossing volumes warrant them) and aesthetic consideration.

Pedestrian-Scale Lighting

During the public engagement process many participants expressed a desire for better night lighting within the Village Center. As previously discussed, presently the community relies on traditional roadway fixtures along existing utility poles to provide illumination. These fixtures are not pedestrian-focused (i.e., do not attempt to illuminate the pedestrian walkways), are out of scale relative to pedestrians (too tall), are not sharp-cutoff (i.e., spill light where it's not needed) and do not have an aesthetic character that is supportive of the historic qualities of the community.

The incorporation of pedestrian-scaled lighting can be a source of considerable value as a community explores its identity. In addition to establishing a functional streetscape element that supports mobility, light poles often provide an opportunity to place banners, signs, art or other elements that can reinforce a community's identity, announce or celebrate an event and/or establish a sense of rhythm for those driving or walking through the space.

The placement of fixtures within the streetscape will vary, depending on the objective for illumination, type of fixture and where additional lighting might be needed for pedestrian crossings, etc. As a rule, new fixtures would be placed about 60 feet apart to assure an appropriate spread of light while focusing it most on the pedestrian zone.

Modern fixtures come in tremendous diversity of styles; many evocative of historic periods and eras. While the outward appearance of fixtures can be selected to support the surrounding aesthetic context, the lighting systems within modern fixtures are decidedly 21st

century. The use of light emitting diode (LED) technology has made modern light fixtures much more efficient than previous technologies (metal halide, high-pressure sodium) and advances in design allow these fixtures to maintain appropriate color viewing in most lighting conditions. Modern fixtures also incorporate operational systems that control when they turn on, when they turn off or when they might lower the lighting levels. This level of flexibility in design provides many options.

For Chester, the decision to incorporate pedestrian-scaled fixtures as part of any streetscape improvement will require a more detailed assessment of objectives. Selecting fixtures that look good, function well and afford opportunities to provide power within the streetscape for events and outdoor activities, such as al fresco dining and vending, may be important considerations.

The locations along the streetscape where pedestrian-scaled lighting would be most appropriate are indicated on **Figure 11D**.

Accommodating Bicycles

An important idea heard from the community was the suggestion for better accommodation of bicycles within the Village Center. Like many places, Chester was not designed with bicycle use in mind. Communities in many areas are seeking opportunities to improve the safe use of the travel way for bicycles, as well as capitalize on the economic activity that cyclists often bring with them.

Several recommendations have been made related to bicycle accommodation within the Village Center. These are highlighted on **Figure 11E**.

Bike Lanes

Along both sides of Main Street from Church Street to its intersection with Depot Street, the established of a marked bike lane is recommended. This treatment has the benefit of providing a more enhanced accommodation for roadway use of bicycles within the most active segment of Main Street and where parking is allowed.

A relatively low-cost solution, the minimum recommended width recommended for a bike lane is 4 feet (without a curb) and 5 feet (when curbed). The lane would be demarcated through painted lines along the roadway outside of the parking zones. The use of a bicycle symbol with this space is permitted.

Based on the master plan review of the existing right of way along Main Street, establishing a bike lane is feasible, but would require 10-foot travel lanes. It is also possible that during the detailed design of any streetscape improvement the existing curb line could be moved back a few feet to provide needed space. Compliance with AASHTO Bike Guide 2012 and MUTCD 2009 standards related to widths and signage is required. Coordination with VTrans on any roadway improvement is also vital.

Shared Use or Sharrows

Along Depot Street from its intersection with Main Street and extending north to the Town Offices, the establishment of a shared use environment is recommended. In many ways, the establishment of this element does not change what is happening today; bicycles heading south on Route 103 within the Village Center will use the existing shoulder. Adding appropriate signage and indicating the shared use of the road with "arrows" (aka the "sharrow"), can provide a visual reinforcement of the bicycle's presence in the roadway.

Other Considerations

The inclusion of greater bicycle accommodation within the streetscape will undoubtedly require a greater number of bike racks. Placing bike racks in strategic locations adjacent to key destinations helps support the use of bikes for travel to those destinations and visually reinforces the opportunity for passing cyclists to stop and linger. Bike racks should be placed in locations that are convenient but also respectful of existing or new pedestrian paths and private lands. The inclusion of bike racks in bulb-out or curb extensions (of sufficient width) can be particularly useful as it improves the visibility of the bike parking relative to road cyclists. Bike racks also provide an opportunity for public/private partnerships with local business to direct marked to the cycling segment by providing on premise amenities to cyclists.

A good signage and wayfinding system can help direct cyclists to key destination where goods and services are available.

Improving Specific Sites

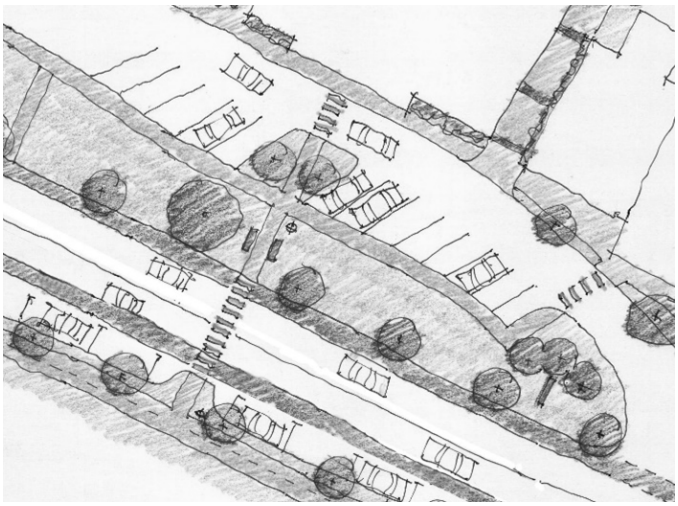
An important part of the Vision is supporting local economic development activity. Based on this and through the engagement process, several "site improvement zones" were identified where specific design elements (in combination with wayfinding, etc.) might help better support local businesses, activities or events and/or might provide additional opportunities for locals to enjoy the village setting. The location for these specific sites is shown on **Figure 11F**.

- **Parking and/or Future Civic Uses at Cobleigh Fields.** As previously mentioned, the idea of a parking area at Cobleigh Fields has been something the community has considered in the past. Developing this parking area and including an innovative feature such as an electric vehicle charging station, could serve to help put Chester "on the map" with regards to the travelling public and provide an additional parking venue. Additionally, the lands within Cobleigh Fields could be used for larger events (tented fairs, festivals, etc.). Improving the link between this community asset and The Common could help strengthen its value for parking and more effectively support business along Main Street (see discussion under *Sidewalks*).
- **Improving the pedestrian experience along The Common and its links Main Street.** Along the Common are beautiful historic structures and many vital businesses within the Village Center. At present, circulation within the Common is one directional from west to east. That flow appears to be the most ideal. What doesn't work well today is the pedestrian experience. Virtually no distinction exists between the roadway surface and areas along the building edges where pedestrians are expected to walk. While not a high traffic volume environment, it is a location where people and vehicles interact in complicated ways.

  The primary objectives for this area are to provide some visual and physical separation between vehicles and pedestrians along the Common, better establish connections along and through the Green and support a potential pathway connection to Cobleigh Fields (see discussion under *Sidewalks*). The incorporation of other elements (streetscape, wayfinding, lighting, etc.) could be done in pursuit of these objectives.

  Challenges in this area include assuring adequate parking or access to parking, managing snow from pitch roofs that accumulates in front of structures and addressing stormwater flow as curbs are established. The opportunity to explore innovative stormwater gardens or similar features within the Green might provide a strategy to address the challenge for stormwater management, add to the function of the green and provide an aesthetic/landscape element with an educational/environmental mission.

  This specific location is explored in more detail as part of the *Design Studies* discussion (see **Figure 15**).



- **Creating an arrival/departure point at the end of School Street.** Creating a specific arrival/departure point at the end of School Street helps promote connectivity of the Village with the River. This specific location is explored in more detail as part of the *Design Studies* discussion (see specifically **Figure 14**).
- **Addressing the areas in and around the Depot.** The historic Depot along Depot Street is a source of civic pride and an active reminder of the importance of railroads to the community and region. Currently used in support of tourism excursion trains that occur periodically during summer months, ideas for the facility included adding a museum or information center to the building's program, and adding visitor amenities such as public restrooms, vending, and/or restaurant. Additionally, the area in and around the Depot, extending along Depot Street up to the town offices and encompassing the park

adjacent to those offices, was an area needing some improvement. Pedestrian flow is complicated by the challenging geometry of the roads. As an arrival point into the Village Center (from points north and from the train), the opportunity to enhance the pedestrian-scale and make this area more inviting, active, and functional was recommended. This specific location is explored in more detail as part of the *Design Studies* discussion (see **Figure 19**).

Relocating Above Ground Utilities

As discussed briefly in Chapter Two, at present all the electric and telecommunications lines servicing the Town are placed along roadside poles. These poles and associated lines can be quite visually unappealing and certainly can affect the appreciation of the historic character of the community. Many participants in the community engagement process suggested undergrounding of utilities to help promote a better "look" for the Village Center.

Many communities have undertaken steps to bury above-grade utility infrastructure as part of streetscape improvement projects. Depending on the context, this can be technically challenging and financially costly. These costs can (and often do) include addressing reconnection of services to existing customers. In denser, village or downtown environments, the number of endpoints can really add up.

Obviously at the master planning level the analysis of those costs is not warranted. Many such relocations happen commensurate with other projects (i.e., streetscape, infrastructure) which can help align resources. Costs for relocation of utilities that are not directly impacted by specific projects are generally not covered in most funding programs.

This Master Plan does recommend the undergrounding of utilities along a portion of Main Street (from Church Street east to its intersection of Maple Street). In this zone, the elimination of above ground infrastructure would have the greatest effect on improving the visual qualities for those arriving from the east, north, or west and align with recommendations for other improvements (streetscape, wayfinding, and lighting).

DESIGN STUDIES

Based on guidance from the community and Steering Committee, eight study areas were chosen within the Village Center to further visualize how the recommended physical improvements might "look" from the perspective of a resident or visitor. The location of these study areas can be found on **Figure 12**.

These illustrative graphics were prepared not to determine the specific design outcome, but rather help communicate how some the physical improvements might come together to enhance the sense of cohesion. The community will need to spend considerable time to scope specific projects that might support the Vision, but these illustrative graphics help highlight what may be possible.

Once again, the area of focus described earlier in this plan are the basis for this exploration. Within each of these areas several "vignettes," cross-sections, and plan graphics are provided. Discussions for each are also provided.

Village Core

- **Main Street at the Green.** As depicted on **Figure 13**, the recommendations described previously come together in this vignette looking west on Main Street near its intersection with School Street. Roadside pedestrian-scaled lighting with banners help establish a strong "edge" and increase the sense of narrowness from the roadway. Enhanced pedestrian crossing become more visible. The sidepath/promenade aids in bicycle movement and provides opportunities for community access to the wonderful historic structures along the roadway. Bike lanes help define bicycle movement and highlight where parking is available. New signs and fixtures add variety to the pedestrian and civic realms.
- **School Street Parklet.** Taking advantage of public space within the right-of-way at the south end of School Street opens an opportunity for a "parklet." While small, this public space help provide a terminus point for a new sidewalk on School Street and connects the River to the core of the Village Center. Providing some greenery, incorporating artwork, seating, and wayfinding all give it a human scale. As a launch point for access across the river to some potential walking or trail use, the parklet serves as a gateway.
- **The Common and the Green.** As described under *Site Specific Improvement Zones*, this study explores how elements such as defined pedestrian space, enhanced crosswalks, pedestrian-scale lighting, wayfinding, curb extensions, and street furniture can come together to elevate the importance of people in a place (see also **Figure 15**). It expresses ideas designed to encourage "lingering" of both visitors and residents who come to experience the village setting. The vignette also highlights (before and after) the impact of eliminating the overhead utility lines.

  The associated concept sketch included on this figure shows an alleyway connection adjacent to the Fullerton Inn for possible season connection to the Cobleigh Fields for remote parking and/or larger events.

Triangle

- **Main Street at Depot Street.** As illustrated on **Figure 16**, the recommended improvements along Main Street need to integrate into other conditions as they meet Depot Street. Common elements such as street lights, banners, signage, street trees and enhanced crosswalks are shown. This illustrative also highlights the location of the existing Jiffy Mart, at the sharp point of the triangle. While no specific design studies were undertaken for that property, its location gives it high importance within the streetscape and its future reuse should consider its potential to influence the Vision.
- **Main Street/Route 103 at Maple Street.** Looking west along Route 103 near the intersection of Maple Street, **Figure 17** illustrates ideas to begin to establish the streetscape character highlight throughout the Master Plan. The intersection is an idea location within which to start some of the improvements, particularly establishing gateway and wayfinding, initiating the pedestrian-scale lighting and undergrounding of utilities. It is possible that the community might wish to extend this character further east.

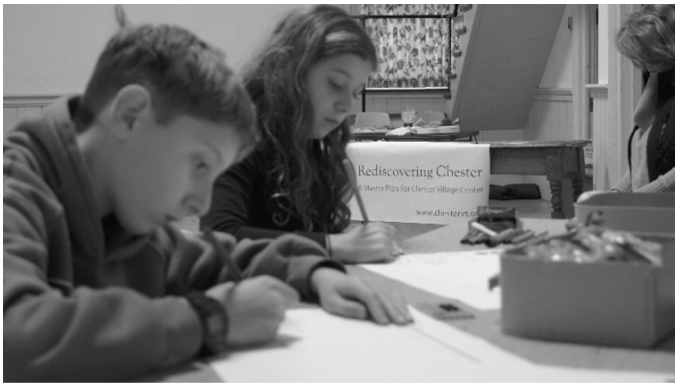
Chester Depot

- **Depot Street at Coach Road.** Redefining the pedestrian space along the east side of Depot Street is the recommended treatment which is illustrated on **Figure 18**. This illustration also highlights the shared use of the roadway for bicycles and the inclusion of some wayfinding system elements (banners) without the inclusion of pedestrian-scaled lighting or removal of overhead utility lines. While the community may want to pursue the removal of overhead lines in all areas of the Village Center, the illustration provides reference for what could be done on a short term or interim basis to initiate aspects of the Vision without elimination of the utility infrastructure.
- **The Depot.** As previously outlined, the area in and around the Depot has complexities of road and pedestrian movement, parking, arrival point and public/civic uses. It is a complex environment. The key elements of the vision expressed here (see **Figure 19**) include enhancing the pedestrian crossing and making them more visible. Establishing an outdoor space associated with the Depot itself where public art and information can be placed to encourage arrival, lingering and encouraging visitors to get out and take the short walk into the Village Core. Reorganize the pedestrian circulation around the park to make it feel more connected. Begin to incorporate pedestrian-scaled lighting to help define this area and visually connect it to the Village Core. These ideas can also encourage the reuse of adjacent building by giving them greater visibility and presence from passing motorists.
- **Depot at Maple Street.** As Depot Street approaches its intersection with Maple Street it a key decision point is revealed. Going straight at the intersection puts the motorist on Route 103 and eventually directs them east towards Springfield. Keeping the motorist on Depot Street (Route 11) brings them into the Village Core.

An important objective of the Master Plan is to support the economic vitality of the community. The Village Core supports many local businesses including restaurants, inns and retail shops. Finding ideas that help encourage the discovery of the Village Core is at the heart of many of the ideas expressed by the community.

As previously described, the pedestrian accommodations along Depot Street are recommended for the west side. As the illustrations on **Figure 20** depict, the inclusion of a sidewalk, pedestrian-scale lighting, wayfinding and signage along this edge helps create a visual cue to motorists that heading to the right might be desired. These ideas do not change the actual circulation or designated routes; Route 103 is still on Maple Street. Service vehicles and trucks heading east will continue to use Route 103. Motorists, however, may be enticed by the inclusion of these streetscape elements to discover another part of Chester.

To help realize this vision one important design element is needed; at the turn along Depot Street the current space is insufficient for expansion of pedestrian facilities. A sloping lawn on private land drops down to the existing sidewalk. The vignette provided suggest cutting back this sloped lawn and proving a short wall to hold it back. This accomplishes two things; it provides the room needed to improve the sidewalks and add some lighting and it visually opens up the view into Depot Street revealing slightly more of the Village Core. Clearly to realize this idea a dialogue with affected landowners is needed.



COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION, AND CAPACITY

The Importance of Working Together

While physical improvements can provide a very real and tangible example of a community's commitment to its vision, it is often the work "behind the scenes" that is critical to enable such outcomes. The work of building a community is never completed. Working together towards a shared vision will require communication, collaboration and a capacity to act. All three of these actions are challenging, particularly in smaller communities where the reliance on volunteers is high.

Despite these challenges, a palpable outcome of the community engagement process for this project has been a greater appreciation for working together. Chester has many passionate and active groups that strongly believe in supporting community objectives.

Community and Organizational Capacity Building

- Keeping the momentum of the current effort going by continuing meetings of the Rediscovering Chester Steering Committee and allowing them to "quarterback" implementation of the plan to ensure efforts align with the vision and values established in the Master Plan
- Conducting a community organization summit to define areas of responsibility, cooperation and collaboration
- Clarifying the Town's role in engaging and coordinating with community organizations
- Promoting on-going community discussions around the themes and ideas raised in the Village Center Master Plan
- Leveraging the exceptional work done by Chester's myriad of local organizations by helping to facilitate communication between them
- Tasking an existing community organization that can act as a central clearing house of information for residents and visitors by building capacity within existing organizations or joining forces across groups
- Forming a downtown association or committee that can help galvanize ideas, act as an agent for implementation, promote strong public-private sector relations and help seek out opportunities for grants and financing will be critical to improving community identity and messaging

Aligning Town Policies and Planning

- Ensuring alignment between historic and Village Center districts, community vision and underlying zoning regulations
- Integrating relevant elements, recommendations and vision of the Village Center Master Plan into the forthcoming Town Plan Update
- Addressing housing needs and issues within the Village Center to encourage a walkable and livable community
- Securing funding and resources by collaboratively exploring available state, federal and private grant programs and engaging in active Capital Improvement Planning
- Capitalizing upon regional and state resources such as the SWCRPC, ACCD, VTrans for support, knowledge and technical assistance

Crafting a Deliberate Community Identity

Whether deliberate or unintentional, all communities have a "brand." It is built up over time through a communities' policies, its residents, its amenities and its physical character. As Community Branding expert Don McEachern has explained, a community identity "is what they say about you when you're not around."

Crafting a deliberate community brand extends far beyond just a logo or a tagline. It provides a clear message about what the community represents through both visual and language elements and is manifested throughout digital and print media as well as physical elements of the City such as gateways, streetscapes and signage. The brand should reflect the vision established by the community and respond to the needs of a "target audience," or the people who come to visit and stay. A strong community brand must be authentic and rooted in reality, and if done right can support economic development, tourism and a sense of community for generations to come.

If a community has done a particularly good job at identifying and understanding its identity, it won't just serve as a marketing tool. Rather, it will be used to guide decision-making, almost like a city-wide mission statement. As Alison Maxwell, Deputy Director of Economic Development for Glendale, California has said, "A city is not Coca-Cola. It's a living, breathing, amorphous entity. Good branding can bring the sum of the parts together and give you a hook to hang your identity on."

Options to support this process include:

- Holding a community "summit" on identity – auditing how its perceived in the market place today and how it wants to be perceived.
- Doing a community identity survey – working with local businesses to poll visitors on what attributes they attribute to Chester.
- Convening the entities active in tourism and local business promotion in the region to work together to explore the identity of the Village Center and the associated messaging and marketing materials

Programming, Events, and Community Services

- Planning and promoting events in the Village Center across media platforms and through organizations to make the intent and messaging around them clear, consistent and widely available
- Handsome Cab return
- Depot Train Station as multi-use museum, visitor center, non-profit offices, etc.
- Creation of an Art Guild that will coordinate art events and art publicity

Image credit: Ilana Panich-Linsman for The New York Times

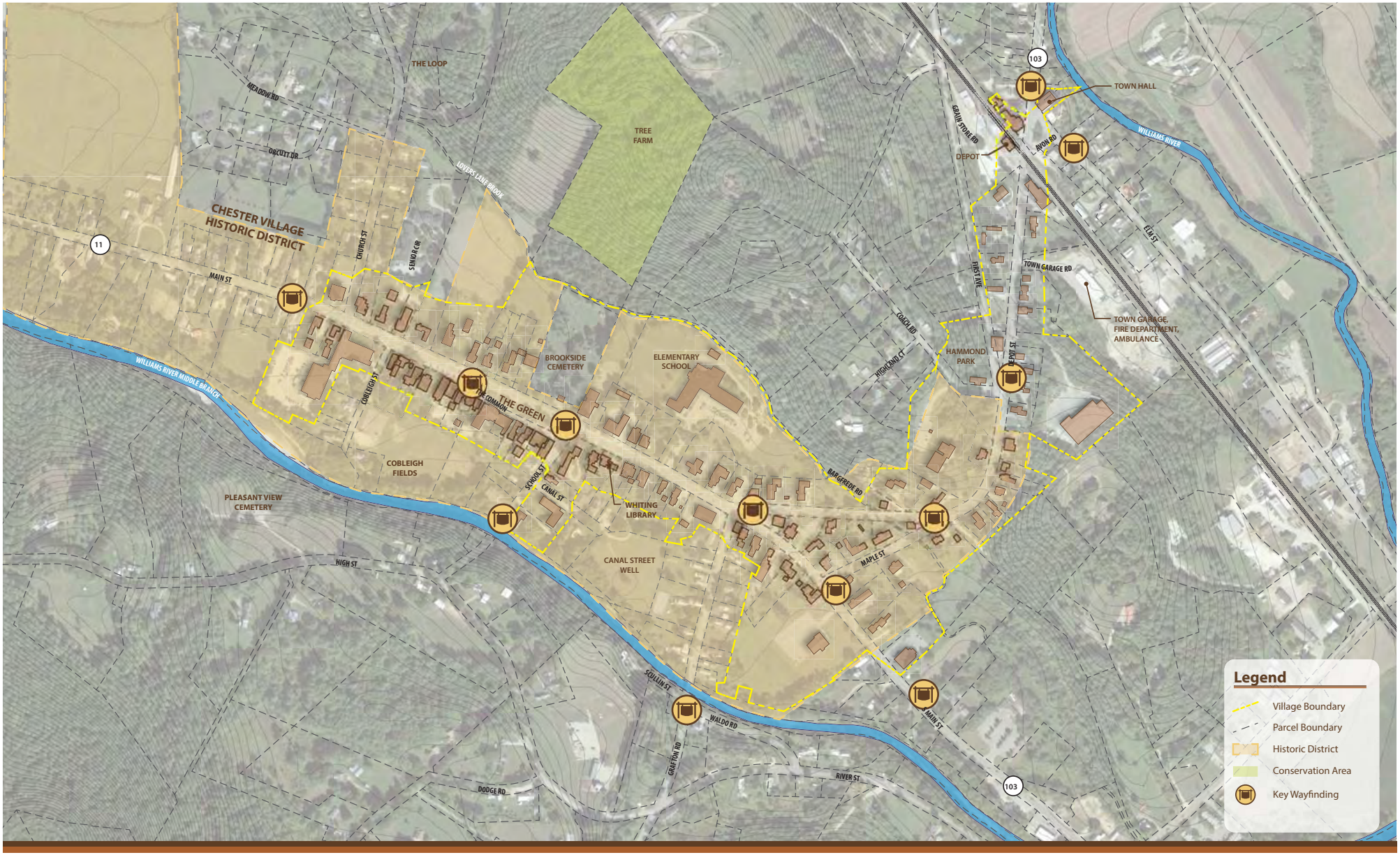


Figure 11A: EXPLORING THE VISION | WAYFINDING

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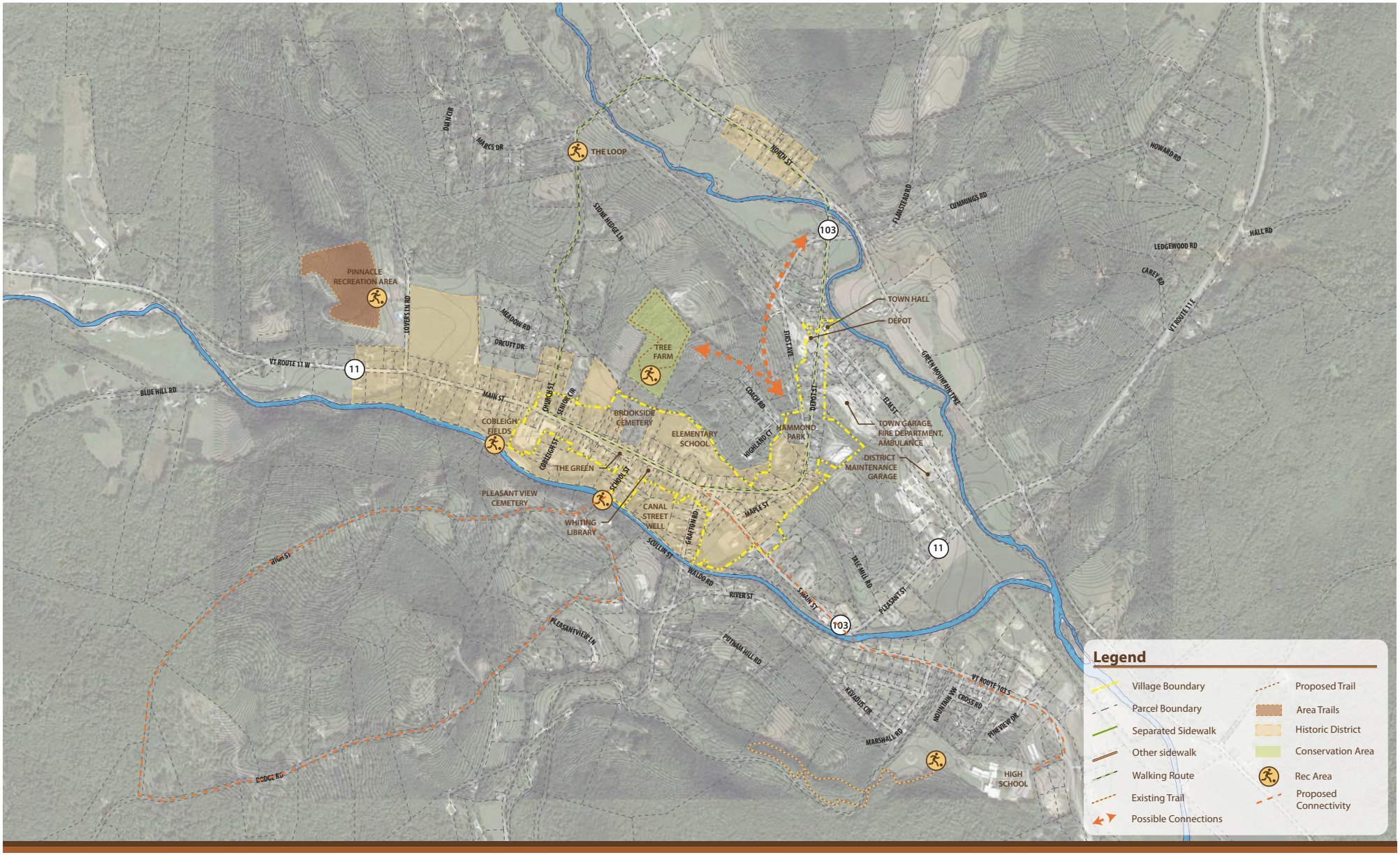

Figure 11B: EXPLORING THE VISION | RECREATION AND CONNECTIVITY

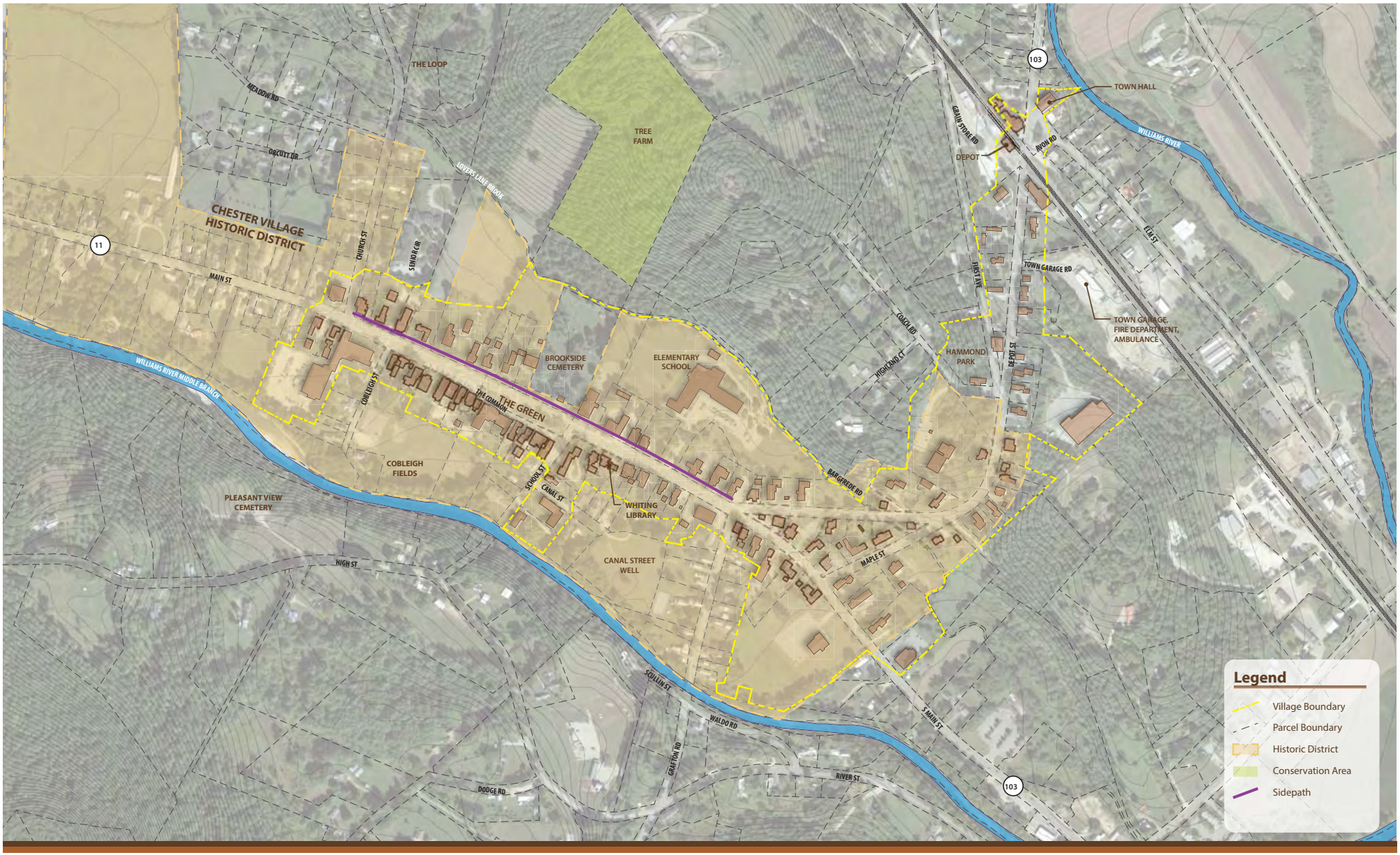

Figure 11C: EXPLORING THE VISION | CREATING A SIDEPATH AND PROMENADE

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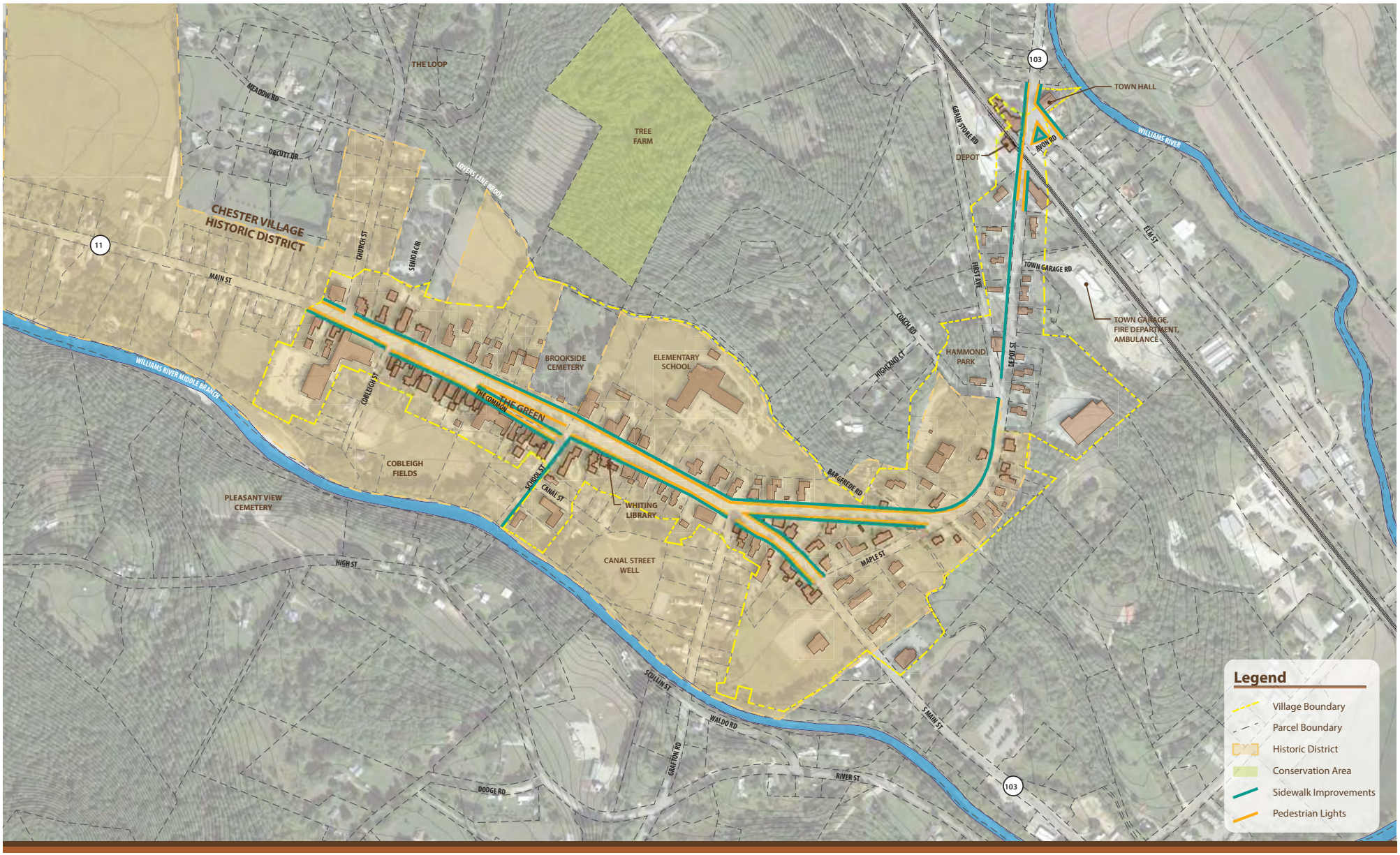

Figure 11D: EXPLORING THE VISION | IMPROVING THE STREETSCAPE

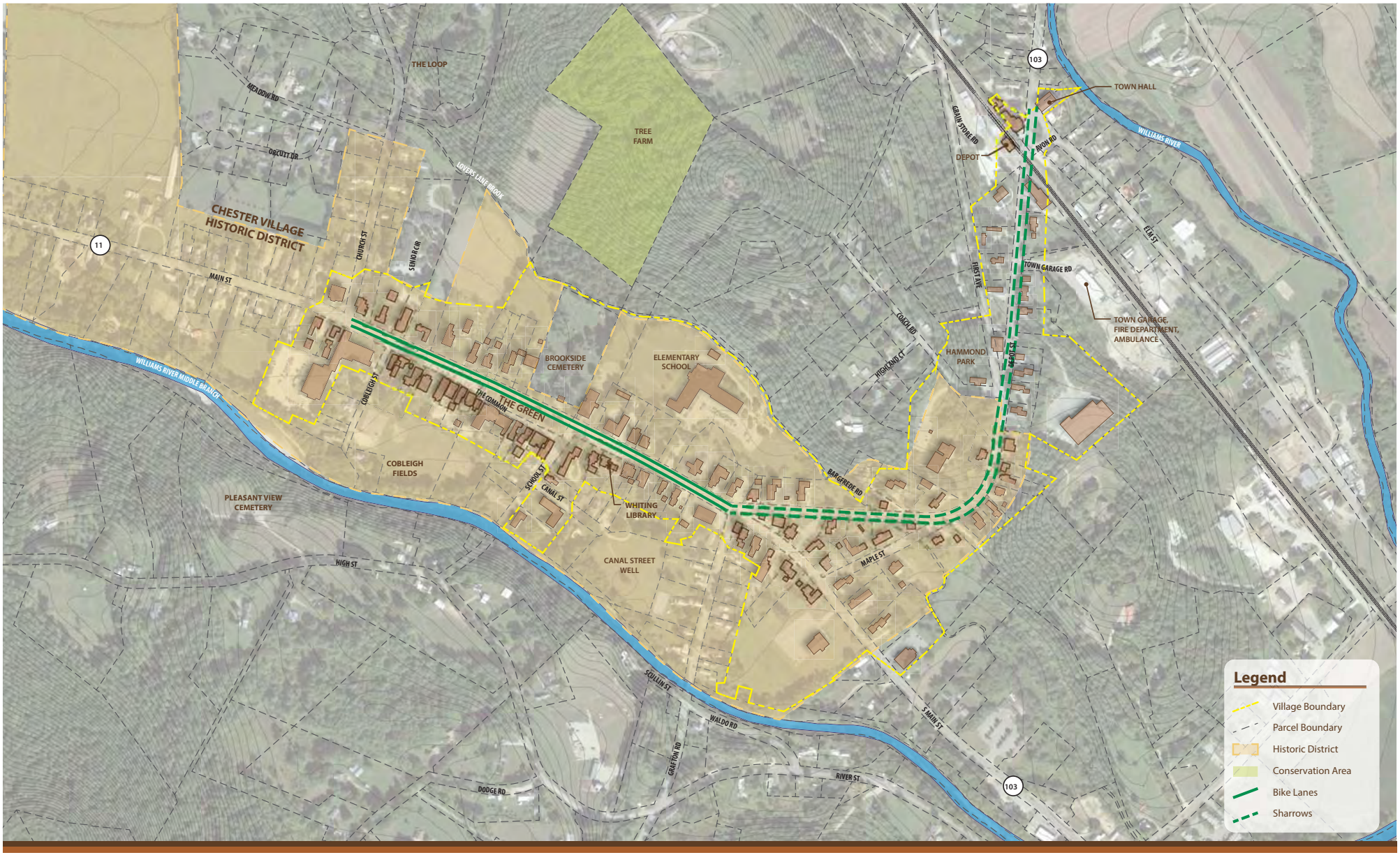

Figure 11E: EXPLORING THE VISION | ACCOMODATING BICYCLE USE

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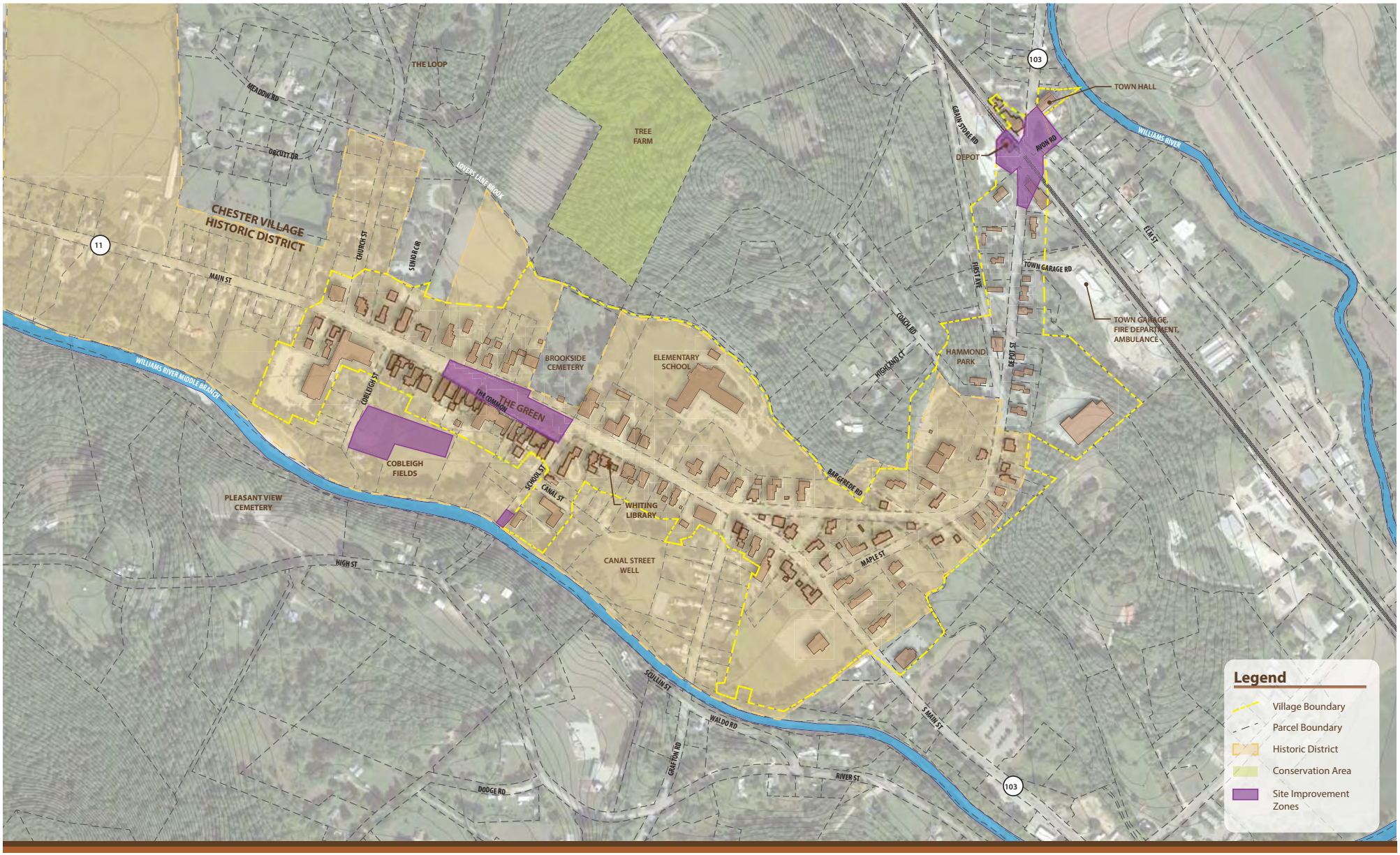

Figure 11F: EXPLORING THE VISION | IMPROVING SPECIFIC SITES

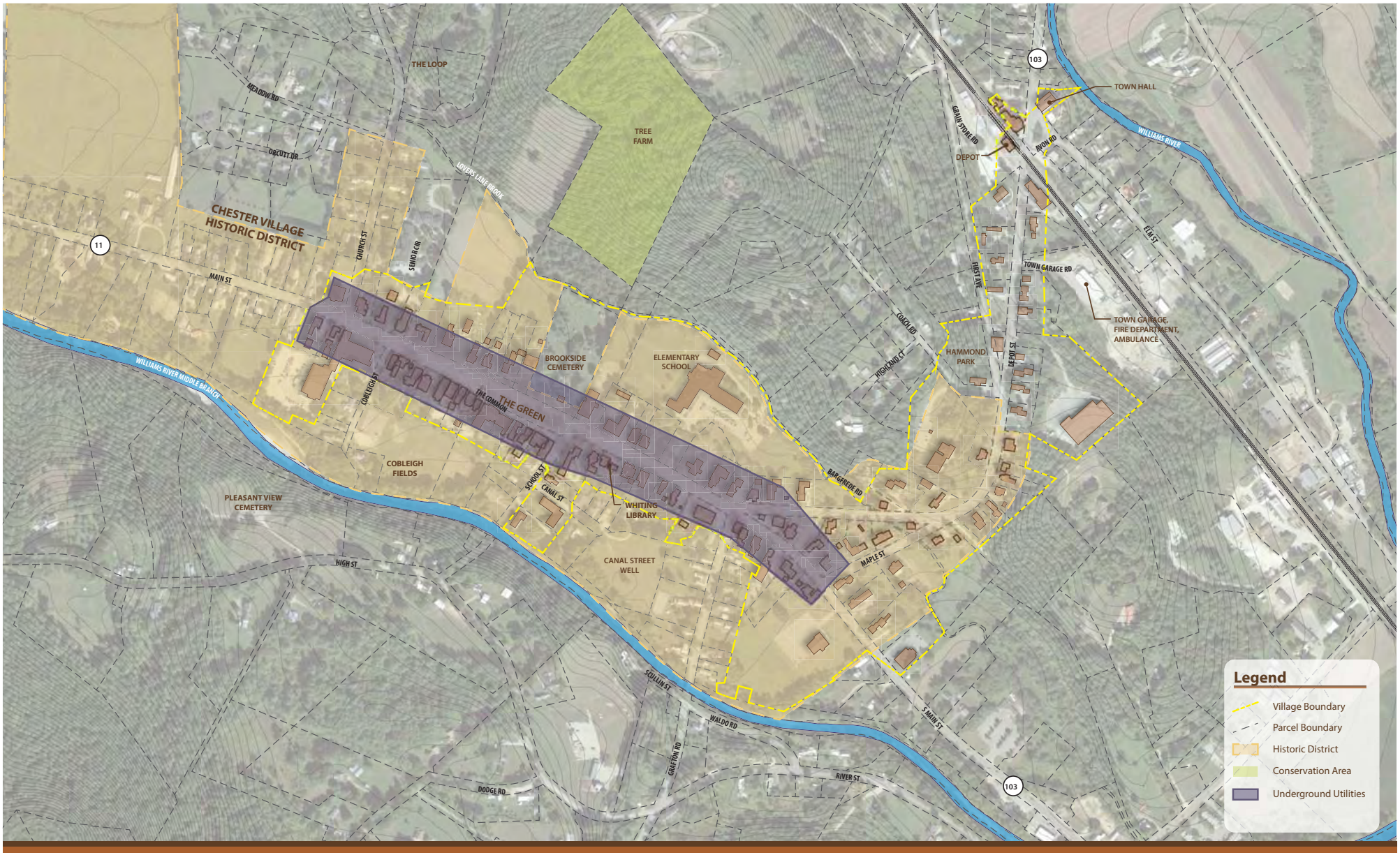

Figure 11G: EXPLORING THE VISION | RELOCATING ABOVE GROUND UTILITIES

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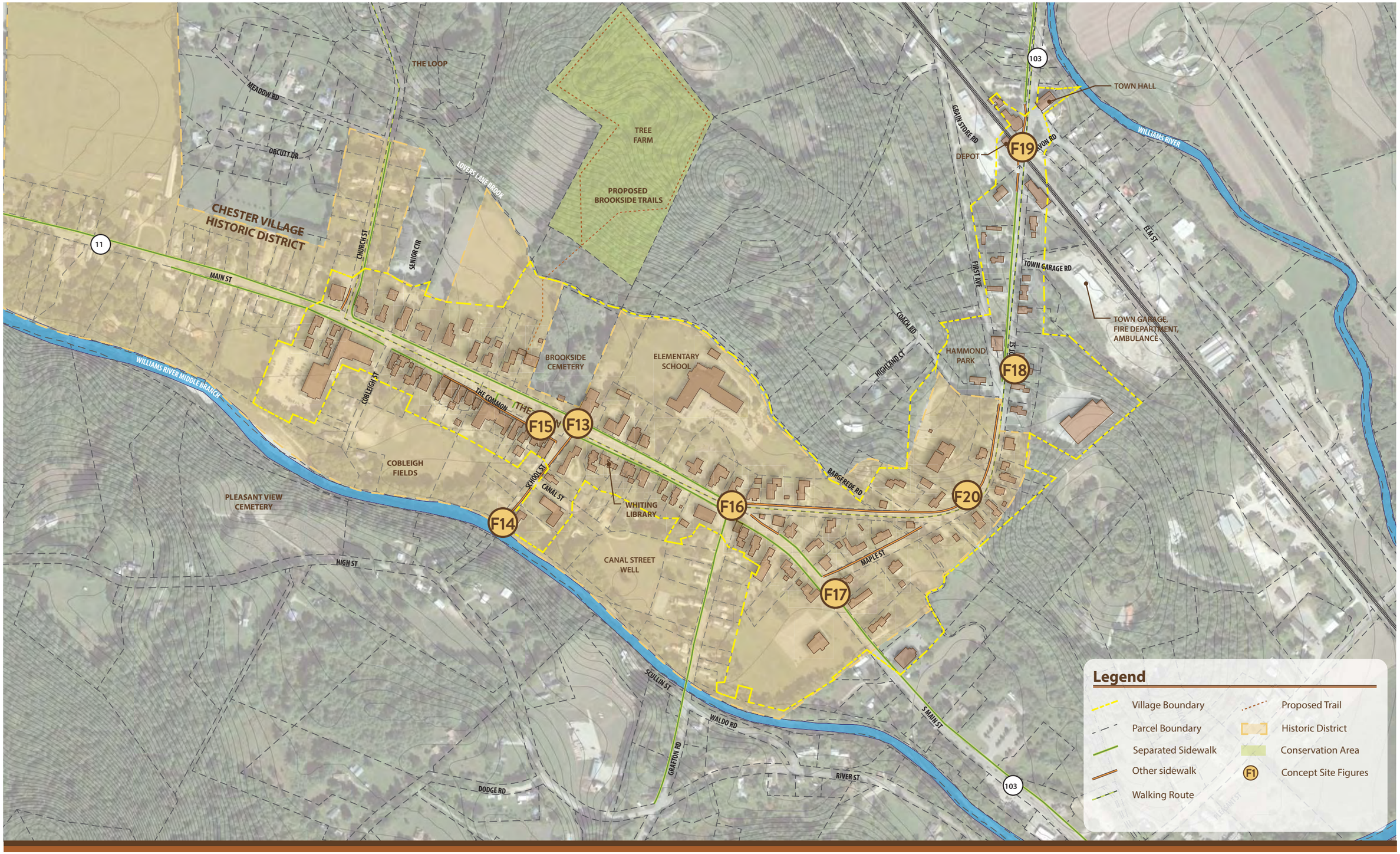

Figure 12: EXPLORING THE VISION | STUDY AREAS

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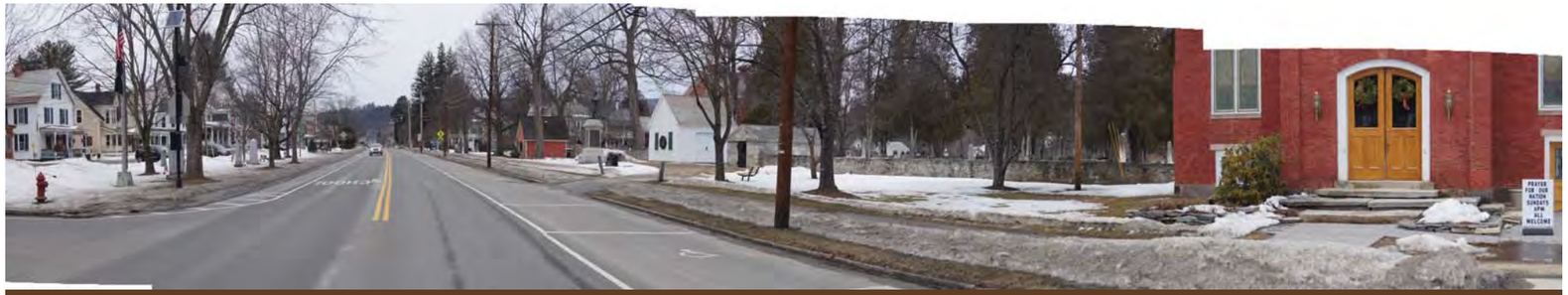

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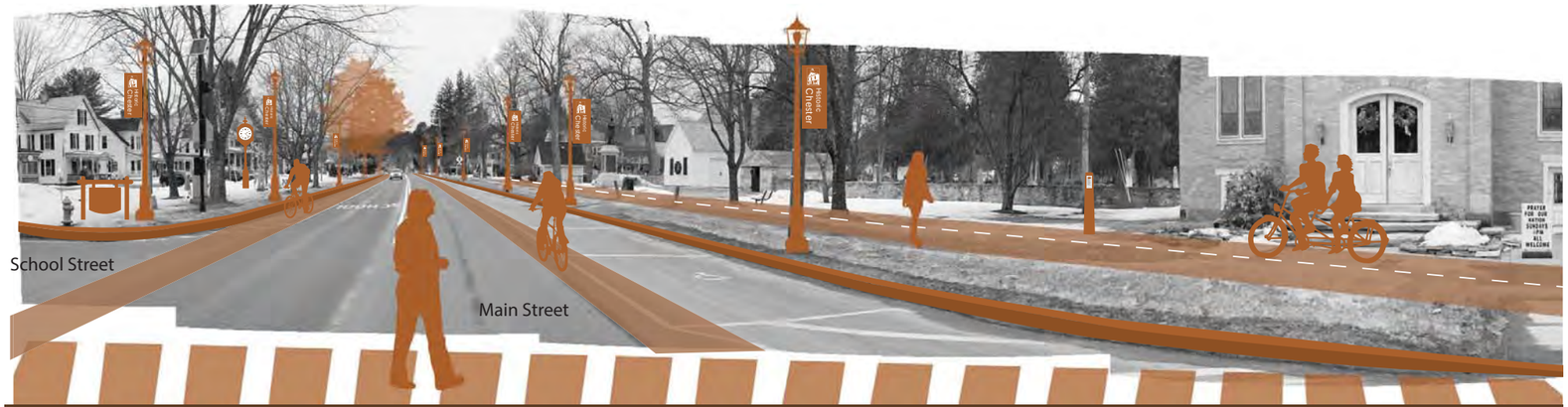
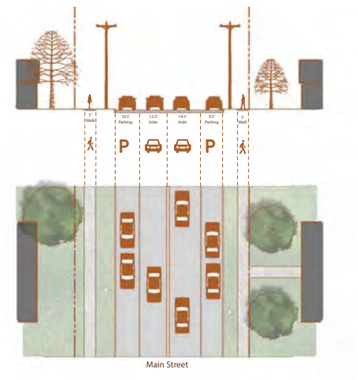


Concept Vignette

- Gateway
- Wayfinding
- Pedestrian Lights
- Bike Lane(s)
- Crosswalk
- Sidewalk/Sidepath
- Streetscape
- Art
- Parking
- History
- Underground Utilities
- Local Businesses



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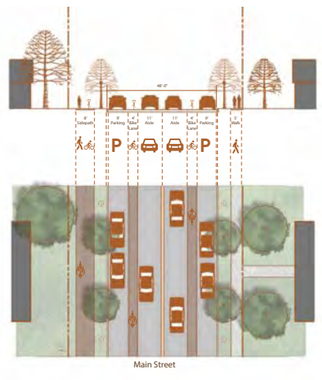
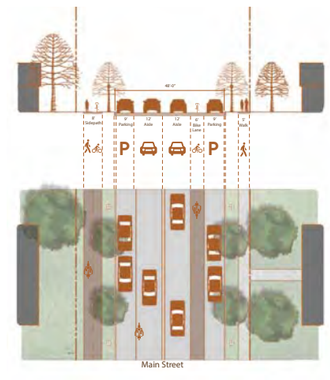
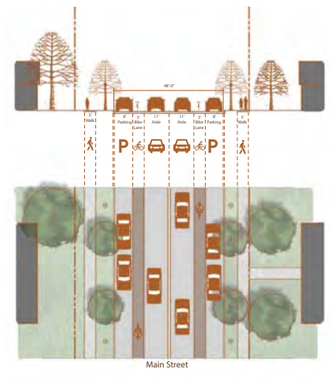


Recommended Solution



Alternative 1



Alternative 2

Key Objectives

- Establish a widened path (i.e. Promenade) along Main Street to provide multi-use option and increase human interaction with historic character
- Better definition of parking areas and crosswalks
- Greater acknowledgement of bicycle use within and through the area
- Addition of visually cohesive identity elements to unify entire streetscape
- Pedestrian-scaled lighting to support night time use
- Signage to help communicate key destinations and historic character (i.e. historic markers).
- Addition of street furniture to encourage "lingering" of both visitors and residents

Study Area Map

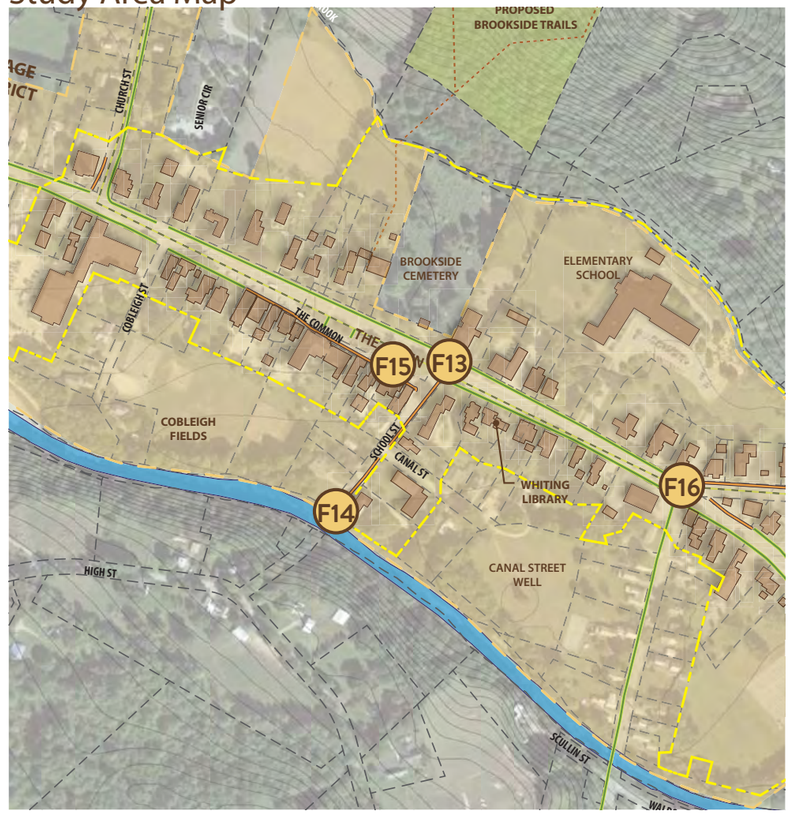


Figure 13: MAIN STREET AT THE GREEN CONCEPT

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Existing Conditions

Concept Vignette

Wayfinding

Sidewalk/
Pedestrian Access

Art

Land Use and Design

Recreation

Key Objectives

- **Upgrade sidewalks and define public space at terminus of School Street**
- **Connect the village center to the river**
- **Make signage and art a thoughtful part of the experience**
- **Opportunity to discuss historic elements and relationship of village to the river**
- **Benefit local businesses, residents, and visitors by providing a unique public space to sit, relax, and enjoy the Village by providing information on area trails and promoting area wayfinding**

Concept Sketch

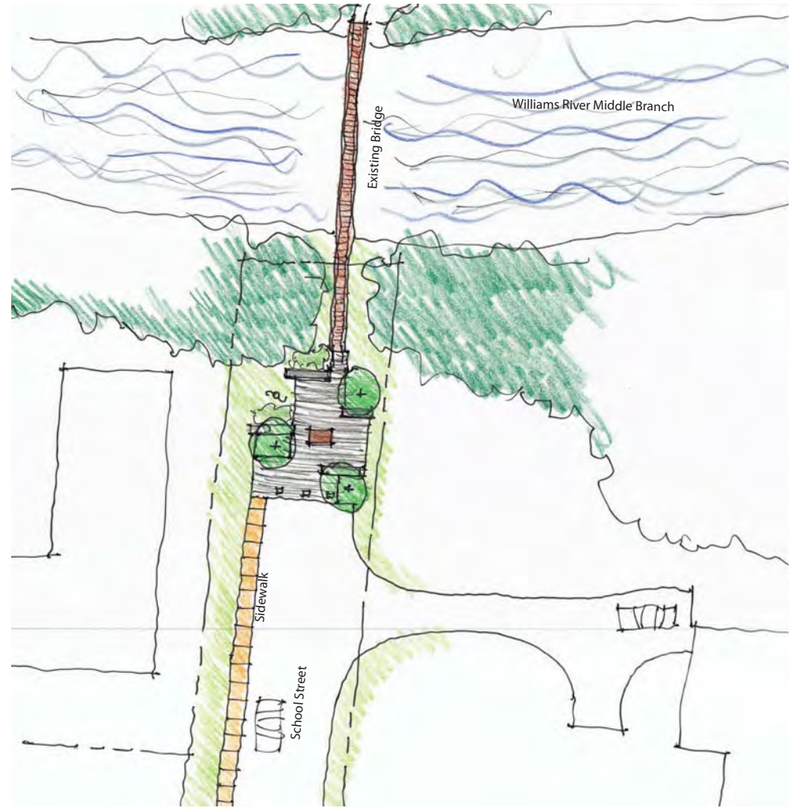

Figure 14: SCHOOL STREET PARKLET

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Existing Conditions

M-2: Concept Vignette

Gateway

Wayfinding

Pedestrian Lights

Crosswalk

Sidewalk/Sidepath

Art

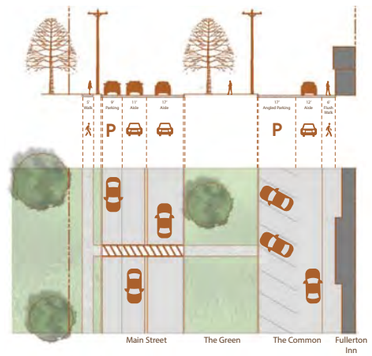
Local Businesses

Streetscape

Parking

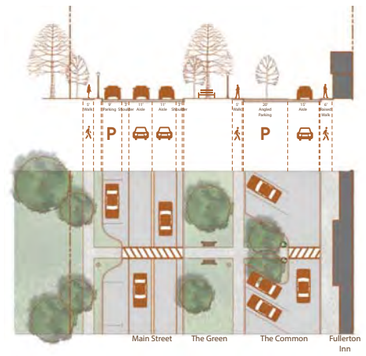
History

Underground Utilities



Existing Conditions

Recommended Solution



Alternative 1

Alternative 2

Key Objectives

- Define pedestrian environment relative to the roadway for better safety and visual appearance
- Establish walkway along the Green to welcome pedestrians and protect the greenspace
- Addition of some trees to help reinforce public space
- Pedestrian-scaled lighting to support night time use
- Addition of bike racks and benches to encourage lingering by all mode of visitors
- Addition of street furniture to encourage "lingering" of both visitors and residents who come to experience the village setting.

Concept Sketch

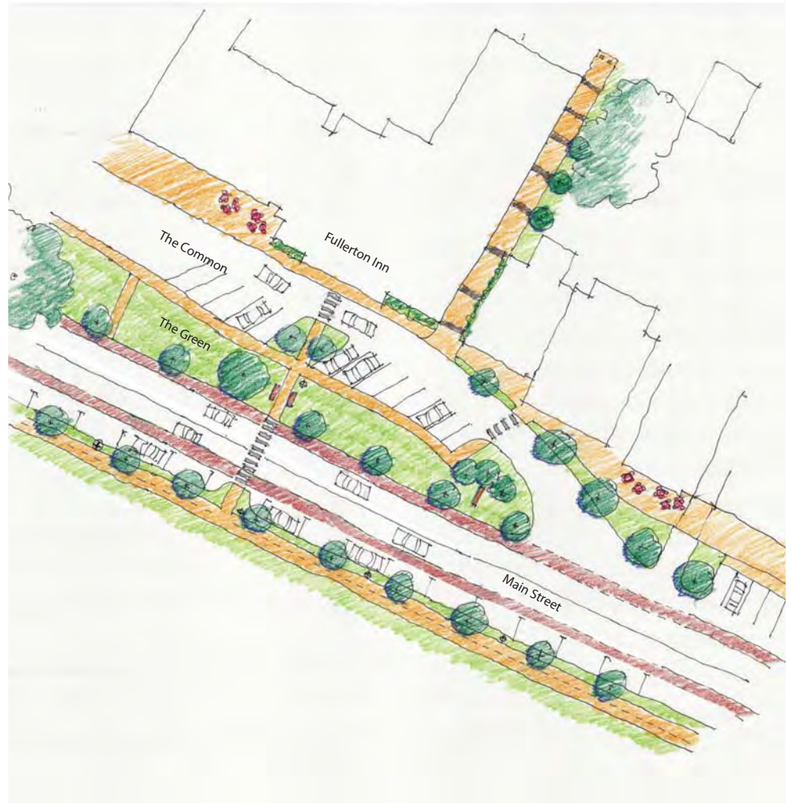


Figure 15:THE COMMON AND THE GREEN

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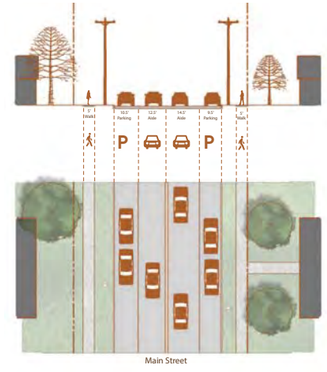
Existing Conditions

M-3: Concept Vignette

Streetscape
Wayfinding
Pedestrian Lights
Crosswalk
Sidewalk/Sidepath
Bike Lane/Sharrows
Underground Utilities



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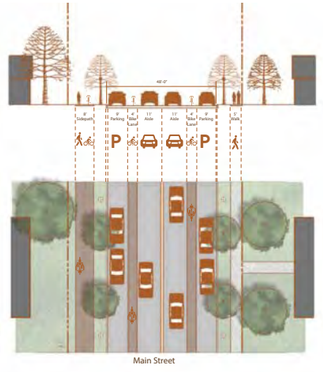
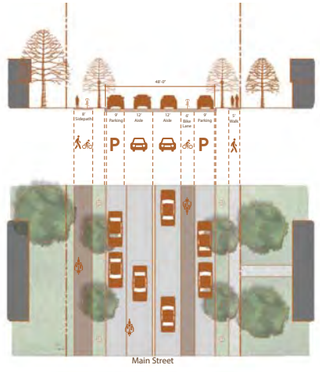
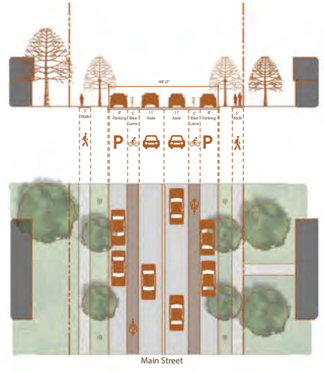


Recommended Solution



Alternative 1



Alternative 2

Key Objectives

- Introduction of the Promenade
- Banners and pedestrian-scaled lighting to connect Main to Depot Street
- Start of more formal on-road bicycle accommodation (i.e. bike lane)
- Addition of some trees to help reinforce public space
- Signage to help communicate key destinations, recreational trails, and historic character (i.e. historic markers)
- Start of undergrounding of utilities to improve aesthetics and reduce visual clutter

Study Area Map

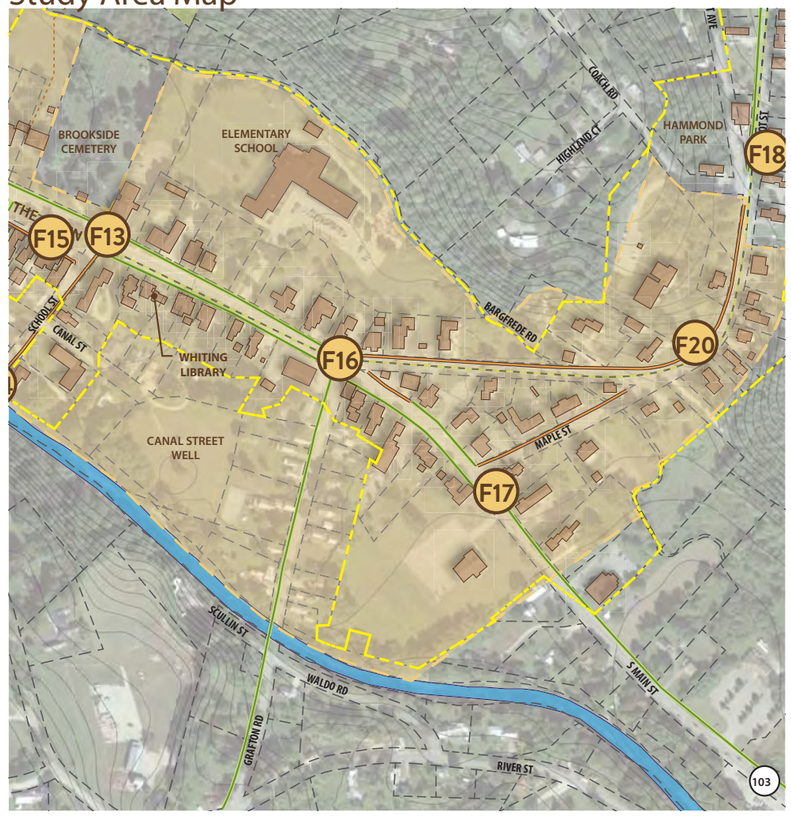


Figure 16: MAIN STREET AT DEPOT STREET

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Existing Conditions

M-4: Concept Vignette

Streetscape

Wayfinding

Pedestrian Lights

Sidewalk/
Pedestrian Access

Crosswalk

Key Objectives

- Start of banners and pedestrian-scaled lighting to reinforce visual arrival
- Gateway signage to communicate village and regional destinations
- Use of existing shoulder for bicycle accommodation

Study Area Map

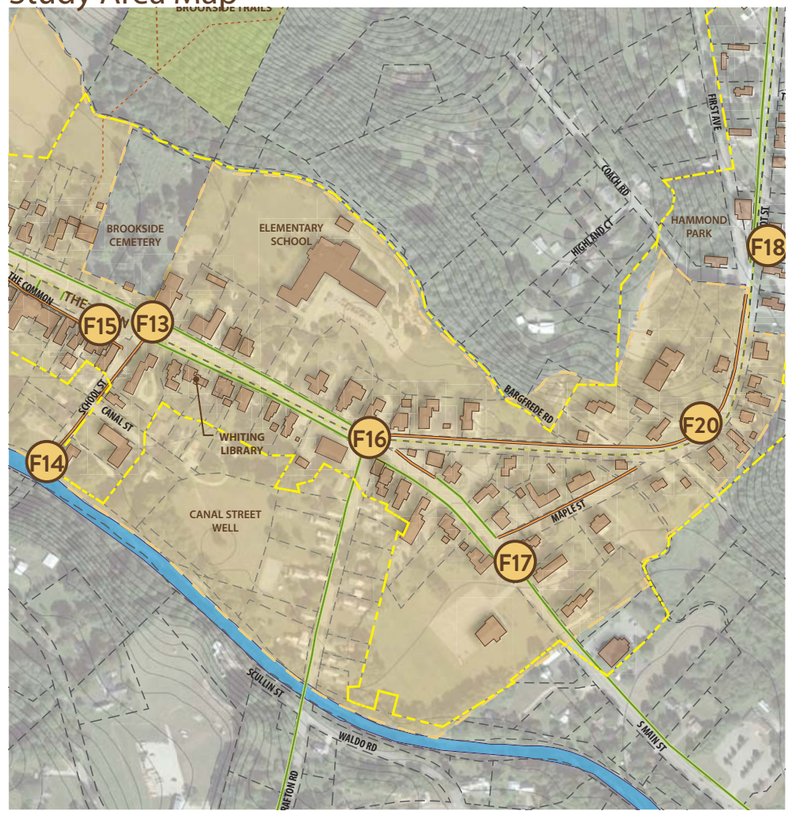

Figure 17: MAIN STREET/ROUTE 103 AT MAPLE STREET

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Existing Conditions

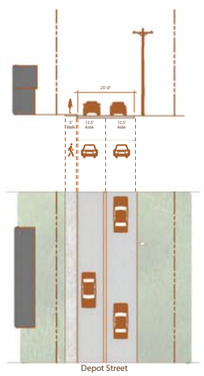
D-1: Concept Vignette

Gateway

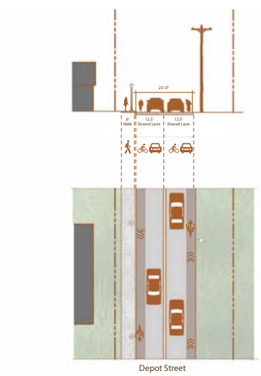
Sidewalk/
Pedestrian Access

Sharrows

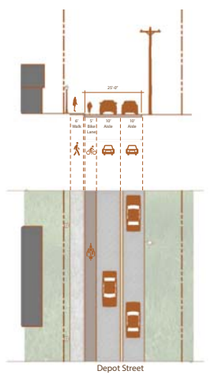
Wayfinding



Existing Conditions



Recommended Solution



Alternative 1

Key Objectives

- **Upgrade sidewalks and better define pedestrian spaces**
- **Introduce some identity elements, wayfinding and gateway features**
- **Elevate bicycle accommodations within limitations of the roadway**

Study Area Map

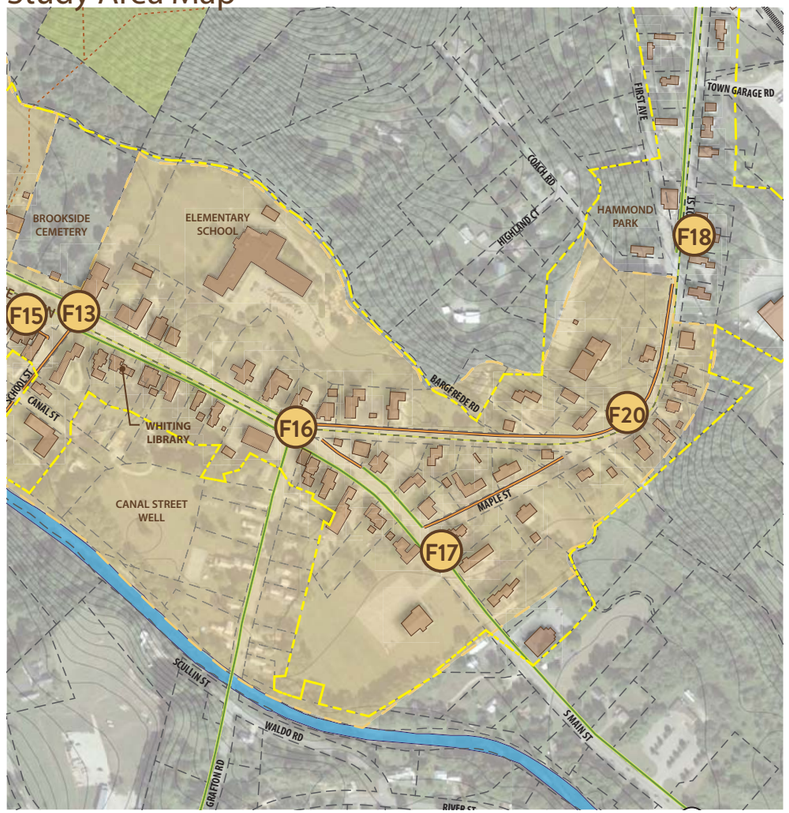


Figure 18: DEPOT STREET AT COACH ROAD

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Existing Conditions

D-2: Concept Vignette

Wayfinding

Streetscape

Pedestrian Lights

Sidewalk/ Pedestrian Access

Crosswalk

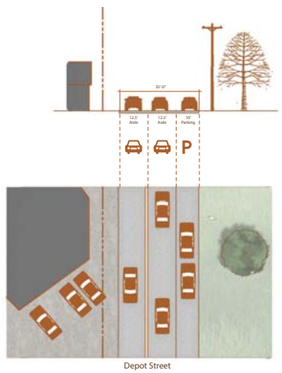
Art

Parking

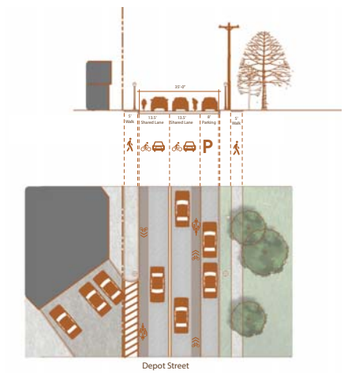
History

Local Businesses

Sharrows



Existing Conditions



Recommended Solution

Key Objectives

- Create an initial "arrival" point for the Village Center
- Define outdoor spaces near the Depot
- Enhance pedestrian crossings
- Addition of some trees to help reinforce public space
- Pedestrian-scaled lighting to support night time use
- Addition of plaza and drop off in front of Depot to improve safety and strengthen connection with Main Street
- Improve parking and pedestrian circulation around Town Hall

Concept Sketch

Figure 19: THE DEPOT

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Existing Conditions

D-3: Concept Vignette

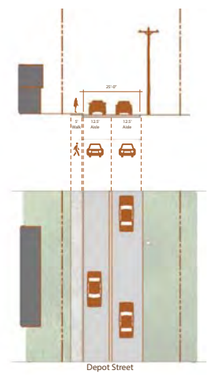
Wayfinding

Streetscape

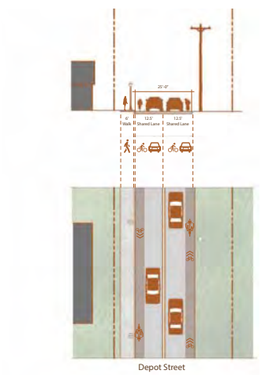
Pedestrian Lights

Sidewalk/
Pedestrian Access

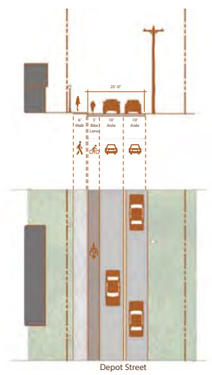
Sharrows



Existing Conditions



Recommended Solution



Alternative 1

Key Objectives

- Begin introduction of more formalized streetscape (i.e. related to Main Street)
- Open the corner along Depot to provide more space for pedestrians and visual integration to Main Street
- Pedestrian-scaled lighting to support night time use
- Visually reinforce Depot Street over Maple Street while not changing existing circulation patterns

Study Area Map

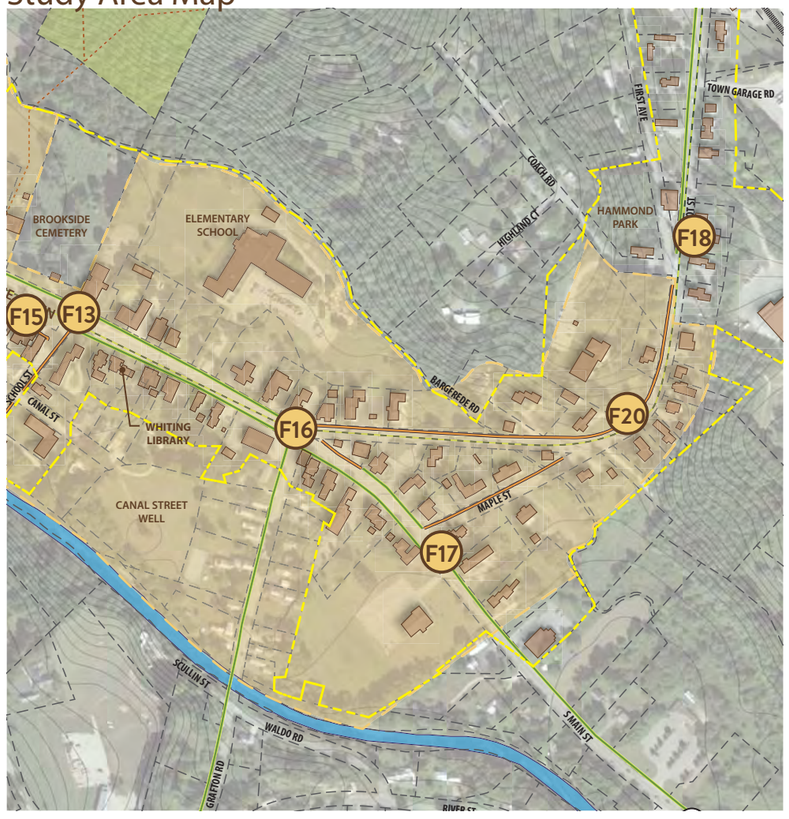


Figure 20: DEPOT STREET AT MAPLE STREET

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Chapter Seven: Implementation

INTRODUCTION

The concepts and strategies explored in Chapter Six support and nurture the Vision. These ideas are not the only ones that might result from this process or the steps taken in the future to continue evolve the Village Center.

This chapter will outline in more detail the ideas studied in Chapter Six and organize them around specific objectives. For each, specific initiatives are identified and described that help affirm and support the thematic elements of the vision. Generalized ranges of costs are also included to help guide future decision making. Perhaps most importantly, ideas for phasing and funding are included to assist the community in moving forward with these initiatives.

This information is summarized on the Implementation Matrix which brings together all the relevant information and identifies tools that can help the community move forward.

KEY OBJECTIVES

The concepts and approaches explored in Chapter Six covered a wide range of ideas to help explore and support the vision. To help make these approaches easier to move forward with they have been organized around a series of "Objectives."

Objectives are "big ideas" and can include both physical improvements and community building efforts. Seven key objectives have been defined. Each objective is broken down into initiatives; many of them akin to the explored concepts. Other initiatives have been identified by the Steering Committee and are included to support specific objectives. By organizing this information in this way, the community can track its progress. Each of the key objectives for the Master Plan is briefly detailed in this section.

Objective #1 – Bringing People to Main Street

Main Street in the Village Center was the focus of many ideas and concepts. Encouraging Main Street to be a focus point of the community aligns with many elements of the vision. Central to this objective is the idea of improving the pedestrian mobility along and across Main Street, expanding the quality of the pedestrian experience through streetscape enhancements, promoting business activity and connectivity, and unifying this experience through arts, history, and culture. A highlight of this objective is the development of the Main Street Promenade and better accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists along Main Street.

Seven specific initiatives have been identified to advance this objective and are outlined in detail on the Implementation Matrix.

Objective #2 – Connecting Depot Street to Main Street

As discussed in Chapter Six, a central challenge for the Village Center is linking Depot and Main Streets in ways that help encourage better visual cohesion and mobility. By improving this linkage, land uses along Depot Street can promote greater connection to the Village Core and travelers heading south on Route 103 can be better aware of the Village Core as they move through the community. Improving mobility can also help capitalize on excursion train activities at the Chester Depot by encouraging visitors to explore further in a walkable and comfortable setting.

Six specific initiatives have been identified to advance this objective, including new sidewalks, pedestrian lights and addressing the need for a retaining wall along a portion of sidewalk to improve visibility. These are described in detail on the Implementation Matrix.

Objective #3 – Enlivening Town Hall

As discussed in Chapter Six, the areas in and around Town Hall are confusing from a circulation perspective and do not provide adequate parking. As an important historic structure with the Village Center, and as an important gateway into the community for travelers from the north along Route 103, the Town Hall area has high visibility and a potential to create a better first

impression. Making the Town Hall area a more inviting civic gathering space also provides value to residents and supports the community identity.

As detailed in the Implementation Matrix, one initiative supports this objective, and relates to better connecting Town Hall with Town Hall Park.

Objective #4 – Connecting to the River

During the public engagement process, the idea of improving the connection between the Village Center and the Williams River became an important discussion. The river has a wonderful character within the Village (and Town) and has precious little connection to the broader community.

As described in the Implementation Matrix, three initiatives support this objective. Two of these involve specific physical improvements along School Street, while the other involves supporting public access to existing town-owned lands outside of the Village Center.

Objective #5 – Supporting Business Activity on Common Street

The existing businesses along Common Street are important contributors to the economic activity within the Village Center. As found throughout this process, in addition to serving the needs of visitors and tourists, these businesses also support locals and help anchor community events. While a greater emphasis on business support is an overall objective, the concepts explored in Chapter Six have resulted in four specific initiatives to help encourage and support business activity on Common Street and near the Green.

Objective #6 – Expressing Community Identity through Signage and Wayfinding

Of the many ideas discussed with the public during this process, the idea of improving the community's image through signage and wayfinding was one that almost always came up in discussion. The fact that this Master Plan focuses on "rediscovery" is in part a reflection of the fact that, at present, signage and wayfinding is wholly inadequate. Finding ways to enhance the pedestrian and human environment through a solid and well thought out signage and wayfinding system is an important objective of this plan.

As the Implementation Matrix shows, five initiatives have been formulated to help advance the objective. These address a range of physical improvement (i.e., establishing gateway signs) and community building efforts (conducting a wayfinding plan that address community identity). Through these steps, the community can reflect on itself and determine how best to project its image outward to those who come to visit. This process should also promote consistency in the description of places, historic resources and other community assets. Assuring compliance with VTrans requirements for signage will be an important part of the process.

Objective #7 – Supporting Good Outcomes

A planning process cannot be successful unless the community supports it. Throughout this effort, the community expressed a desire for strategies to help build community, promote collaboration and help guide future decisions. These can all help support good outcomes.

As the Implementation Matrix shows, seven specific initiatives have been formulated to help advance the objective. Many of these relate to supporting policy changes in the community to align with the Master Plan's vision. Others clarify the importance of local businesses and the importance of supporting them. Still others reflect ways to support arts and history in the community—elements that are pivotal to the success of many community objectives. Aligning local policies to support housing options within the Village Center that help improve vibrancy is another key initiative. Perhaps most importantly, the need for an organization to continue past the development this plan and to assure future outcomes has been captured in an initiative.

KEY INITIATIVES

Many of the initiatives have been identified by the Town as "Key Initiatives."

These are projects or efforts that are generally of high priority and where the Town expects to begin moving forward with in the very near term. In addition, these initiatives often help begin work on an objective and start the ball rolling.

The Key Initiatives are graphically highlighted on **Figure 21**.

USING THE IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The Implementation Matrix provided at the end of this chapter summarizes the objectives and initiatives. In addition, it provides a useful checklist of partners to move these initiatives forward, quantities (areas, distances, etc.) to help characterize the specific physical improvement, important recommendations on implementation challenges or strategies, references back to this plan and the study concepts presented in Chapter Six, how each initiative supports the broad thematic elements of the community vision as expressed in Chapter Five, ranges for costs, relevant funding strategies and case studies (presented later in this chapter).

This matrix is intended to serve as a tool to help the community track its efforts. Key initiatives within the matrix are highlighted with a check-mark, reflecting those that the community wants to call specific attention to and promote in the short term.

CASE STUDIES

Exploring how other communities have addressed some of the big ideas and challenges for the Village Center can be a helpful way of charting a course forward. For several important objectives and initiatives, relevant case studies have been found. The following highlight some of the most salient points from these studies. The associated web links provide more detailed information and/or contact.

Case Study #1 – Preserving and Sharing Heritage in Oberlin, OH

The Oberlin Heritage Center (OHC) in Oberlin, OH offers a wide array of educational programs and special events both at its complex of historic sites and throughout the community, often in collaboration with other organizations. The award-winning history organization and museum is widely recognized as a model small museum, historical society and historic preservation organization whose activities may provide a good touchstone for the Town of Chester as it works to preserve and share its own heritage. The OHC is particularly noteworthy in this regard because it has effectively engaged the resources of its staff, volunteers, and members through a widespread culture of participation. The OHC has preserved, interpreted, and shared multiple histories of Oberlin in very effective ways that continue to engage its members, serve the Oberlin community at large, and interest and inform the many visitors to Oberlin.

Image from Oberlin Heritage Center (OHC)

The OHC includes the historic Monroe House (1866), Jewett House (1884), and Little Red Schoolhouse (1836–1837). The center offers guided tours of these three sites, as well as guided "Sneak Peek" mini-tours. History walks, focusing on topics of various historical themes, are offered regularly during warm weather months. The organization's business office and the museum store are located in the historic Monroe House, which also serves as one of many visitor center portals in the community. The museum store includes a unique assortment of Oberlin history-themed books and mementos. The Oberlin Heritage Center Resource Center features an array of reference materials relating to Oberlin's history

including genealogical information on early Oberlin families, historic house inventories, and building preservation resources.

The organization is funded by memberships, contributions, endowment income, investments, grants, special projects and planned gifts. At the heart of the organization are some 725 individual, family, business and organizational members from Oberlin, across Lorain County, OH and throughout the country. The OHC has grown from being an all-volunteer organization at its inception in 1964 to being run by a staff of six full time employees, two-part time receptionists and student interns. Over two hundred volunteers of all ages and backgrounds assist in many ways including giving tours, doing research, helping with events, working in collections care and cataloging, serving on committees, taking photos, gardening, assisting with public relations and more. Find out more at www.oberlinheritagecenter.org. Of particular note are the OHC Factsheet and OHC History Overview.

Case Study #2 – Creating a Complete Main Street in Concord, NH

Complete Streets is a philosophy and approach to planning, design, construction, and maintenance of transportation networks that consider users of all types and abilities including pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders with all their varied mobility requirements. The Complete Streets approach to planning and engineering has arisen after many decades where automobiles were the primary, and sometimes only, mode of transportation considered in the design process. In the past ten+ years, there has been a steady shift toward a more comprehensive view of users that should be considered in the planning and design of transportation networks. In Vermont, a state-wide complete streets policy was implemented by Act 34 of the 2011 Legislature, which "ensure(s) that the needs of all users of Vermont's transportation system—including motorists, bicyclists, public transportation users, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities—are considered in all state and municipally managed transportation projects and project phases, including planning, development, construction, and maintenance…"

One New England community that has found remarkable success in implementing Complete Streets policies is Concord, NH. Like the Town of Chester, the City of Concord was searching for ways to increase commerce to the downtown, revitalize an underutilized downtown business and residential district, and increase downtown property values. Through the 2011 "Rethinking Main Street" study, the interest among the Concord community grew to create a "new" Main Street to support mixed-use development, an enhanced sense of place, and an expanded pedestrian environment, while preserving and enhancing the authentic historic character of the downtown.

Image from City of Concord, New Hampshire website

After receiving a 2012 Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Concord's Complete Streets project converted the existing four-lane Concord Main Street to a two-lane roadway promoting multi-modal use and offering more transportation choices, all while improving livability, safety, and providing a reliable transportation network. Innovative improvements to traffic signals, sidewalks, and accessibility has reduced traffic congestion and improved pedestrian safety. With more than a dozen new businesses opening in the core of downtown since the project's beginning, Concord's new Main Street has enhanced opportunities for cultural events, social gatherings and doing business. In addition, the project has won an outstanding historic preservation project award from the N.H. Preservation Alliance for revitalizing the street utilizing historic research and celebrating historic features. Find out more at the project website or in the Rethinking Main Street report.

Case Study #3 – Beautification Efforts Creating an Economic Impact in St. Albans, VT

St. Albans is a small city of about 7,000 residents in Franklin County, Vermont. With an established vision for a revitalized downtown, the City completed a Master Plan for streetscape improvements that would foster economic growth and vitality in the district in 2009. Through the Master Plan, the community coalesced around a common vision for completing physical improvements to the historic downtown that communicate a compelling sense of place, encourage pedestrian activity, and attract outside investment. In 2012, the City began implementing this vision by constructing pedestrian-scale lighting, replacing street trees, improving sidewalks, encouraging outdoor dining, and instituting traffic calming measures. Wayfinding, community branding, and parking were also addressed. While the primary goals of the streetscape improvement included economic vitality and place making, the City sought to accomplish these goals using the most sustainable solutions possible, particularly about managing stormwater in an urban setting and incorporating Traditional Urban Form (New Urbanist) design principles. Armed with an unclouded vision for the future, sound planning principles established through a collaborative process, and thoughtful design, the community has brought beauty, street life, and general vitality back to the downtown.

Because of this activity, the City of St. Albans is flourishing, welcoming nearly 50 new businesses and 300 workers, including 140 state employees, to its historic downtown and commercial center over the past five years. This robust revitalization is no accident—businesses, property owners ,and municipal officials have worked together with the State to take advantage of tax incentives, grants, and planning assistance through the State Designation Programs, administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development, support for transportation planning and implementation with grants administered through the Vermont Agency of Transportation, and the designation of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District. While TIF is not (yet) a tool that Chester can take on, the focus of St. Albans in investing in themselves is the heart of their strategy.

The decade-long effort to revitalize St. Albans was recently capped by the announcement of a new 88-room downtown hotel that recently opened. Also currently under construction and planned for the near future are additional streetscape enhancements along Main and Lake Streets to be funded with $300,000 in Transportation Alternative Program funds and $300,000 in Transportation Community and System Preservation Program funds. The City is currently working on Area Master Plan as part of a brownfields grant.

All this proves that St. Albans is not resting on their past success, but continuing to create a vibrant community with a diverse economic base. As the city continues to move forward, the example of its recent accomplishments offers a roadmap that Chester may be able to replicate. For more information see the Agency of Commerce and Community Development report on St. Albans' transformation or the Vermont League of Cities and Towns Presentation on its successes.

Case Study #4 – Bringing Art and Fun to Main Street in Greenville, NC and Saratoga, Springs, NY

Many communities have engaged local artists in public art projects that bring culture, fun and economic activity to downtowns. One example of this is the Mice on Main Street project in Greenville, SC. Mice on Main involved installing a family of nine unique mice sculptures in surprising places along Greenville's Main Street, creating a fanciful downtown scavenger hunt for children of all ages. The project builds upon the identity of Greenville, and has brought tourists, families and people from all walks of life to downtown Greenville to get in on the fun. See the project website for more information.

Another example of how installations of public art can help a community reinforce its identity, invigorate its downtown and celebrate local artisans are the horse and ballet shoes sculptures found throughout downtown Saratoga Springs, NY. Saratoga Springs is home to Saratoga Race Course (the oldest continuously-running sporting-event complex in the country) and Saratoga Casino and Raceway, so horses have long been a mainstay of Saratoga Springs culture and identity. The city also plays host to the annual Dance Flurry Festival, along with elaborate galas, the National Museum of Dance and the New York City Ballet summer season.

Over a period of a few years the "Horses Saratoga Style" and "Saratoga En Pointe" public art projects have installed fiberglass sculptures decorated by local artists throughout the downtown. Horses Saratoga Style was organized by the Saratoga County Arts Council and the YMCA of Saratoga and Saratoga En Pointe was organized by the National Museum of Dance. In 2002 there were 24 horses and in 2007 the event grew to 34. In 2013 there were 24 gigantic ballet toe shoes installed in the City. A few horses and ballet shoes remain on display every summer as a reminder of the projects. Both outdoor sculpture exhibits are modeled after the international Cow Parade, which is an international public art exhibit that has been featured in major world cities where in fiberglass sculptures of cows are decorated by local artists, and distributed over the city center, in public places such as train stations, important avenues, and parks. They often feature artwork and designs specific to local culture, as well as city life and other relevant themes.

The Town of Chester may be able to institute a similar public art event that captures the local flavor and rich heritage of the community. For more information see the Cow Parade website.

Images on this page from City of Greenfield, NC and Saratoga Springs, NY

Case Study # 5 – Exploring a Destination Through Wayfinding in Mammoth Lakes, CA

Mammoth Lakes is the only incorporated community in Mono County, California, surrounded by the Inyo National Forest. As a mountain resort community, Mammoth Lakes' economy is primarily tourism-based, creating a strong need for effective wayfinding and consistent community branding. The Mammoth Lakes Wayfinding Plan and resulting signage has been very effective at both branding the community and directing travelers. The signs incorporate the branding and identity standards for the community, which transcend mediums extending from the web, to printed materials all the way through to the built environment, and provide a seamless journey for visitors as they transition from State Roads to their destination in the Town of Mammoth Lakes.

The wayfinding signs use an "information hierarchy" to organize community gateways, routes, districts, and destinations. Vehicular signs lead visitors from the State Highway to the Town gateways. A sense of arrival at the gateways is achieved through a variety of elements which welcome visitors to the Town, including architectural elements, public art, lighting, landscaping, and of course signage. From the gateways, the next order of vehicular signs direct travelers to destinations and districts like bread crumbs along a path. Once at a destination or district, vehicular arrival signs alert users that they have reached their destination.

Another level of vehicular directional signage provides trailblazing to surrounding parking. Finally, parking arrival signs are provided. When street parking is the primary option, people are directed to the front door of the destination to allow the visitor to circle the block to find parking. Once travelers have left their cars, a series of pedestrian-oriented signs complete the wayfinding system. Pedestrian-scale signs are smaller (not visible from a vehicle) and direct travelers to second tier destinations, paths, nodes, or clusters. Informational kiosks at parking areas function much like a directory at a mall and provide options for multiple types of information, as well as cross-marketing of Town activities and events. Pedestrian directional signs define pedestrian or bike routes and orientation maps are provided at destinations, trailheads, and lodging. The kiosk and orientation maps become standard artwork that is used for print, web, and other media. Departure route signs provide clear pathways to the nearest roadway from the many destinations within the Town of Mammoth Lakes. See the Mammoth Lakes Wayfinding and Signage System Plan for more information.

Images on this page from Town of Mammoth Lakes

Case Study # 6 – Revitalizing a Historic Downtown in Salem, MA

Salem is famous for its history, including the famous witch trials. In 2007 the City of Salem, the Salem Redevelopment Authority, and the Salem Chamber of Commerce embarked on a downtown market study and action plan with the goal of revitalizing the City's historic downtown with a mix of retail, restaurants, museums and attractions, and a wealth of historic architecture. Despite its assets, Salem's commercial environment was not conducive to resident shopping, even with housing and employment downtown. Stores were so focused on the seasonal tourist market that they shut down during the off season, contributing to the sense of vacancy and lack of activity downtown.

The market study found that restaurants were a key downtown asset and consumer trends indicated that people were eating out more frequently. The action plan put in place recommended that the city change its ordinance and ease its permitting process to promote outdoor dining on sidewalks in the downtown. This enabled existing restaurants to capture a greater share of the seasonal tourism traffic, and promote activity on the streets downtown, while strengthening the community's restaurant cluster regionally and positioning it to respond to increased consumer demand.

The plan also recommended creating more seasonal downtown events, such as an arts market and new farmers market, introducing new signage and wayfinding, encouraging more housing downtown, and developing a parking management plan. The plan laid the foundation for the revitalization of the dormant Main Streets organization as a program of the Chamber of Commerce. With the institutional backing of the Chamber and the support of the City, the Main Street program implemented most of the recommendations in the plan over a three-year period. Seventy new businesses were developed in the downtown due to the plan's implementation and recruitment efforts by the revived Main Street program. Real estate developers responded to the changes and added over 400 new residential units to the downtown despite the downturn in the economy during the Great Recession. More information on downtown Salem can be found here: http://salemmainstreets.org/.

Images on this page from Salem Main Street program, Salem Chamber of Commerce

FUNDING RESOURCES TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION

Moving the objectives and initiatives forward is something that will require resources. No community goes at it alone as it shapes its future. Communities also need to mine local resources and support efforts. It can be a challenge to get community by-in on specific initiatives. Perhaps the best approach for moving any initiative forward is to align it with appropriate grants, leverage existing local resources and position it for private sector investment. The following programs may be relevant to some or all of the initiatives expressed in the Implementation Matrix. Key programs have been identified on the matrix for reference using their respective abbreviations (LWCF, for example).

Federal and State Grants and Programs

Land and Water Conservation Fund State and Local Assistance Program (LWCF)

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) state assistance program provides matching grants to help states and local communities protect parks and recreation resources. LWCF funding has benefited nearly every county in America, supporting over 41,000 projects. From building hiking and biking trails, to improving community parks, playgrounds and ballfields, this 50:50 matching program is the primary federal investment tool to ensure that families have easy access to public, open spaces.

http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html

Surface Transportation Plan (STP)

The State Surface Transportation Program (STP) is the main program of Federal Transportation Funds, managed by VTrans, for transportation improvements in the state. STP projects are typically planned and designed at the state level.

Surface Transportation Signage Plan (STPG)

The State Surface Transportation Signage Program (STPG) is a program of Federal Funds, managed by VTrans, for updating and improving transportation signage in the state.

USDA Rural Development Loan and Grant Assistance (RD)

USDA Rural Development (RD) forges partnerships with rural communities, funding projects that bring housing, community facilities (including trails and active transportation facilities), business guarantees, utilities and other services to rural America. Rural Development works with state, local, and Indian tribal governments, as well as private and nonprofit organizations and user-owned cooperatives. This program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community in a primarily rural area.

http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program

National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTC)

The National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTC) program supports community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the nation. Their national network of conservation and recreation planning professional's and partners with community groups, nonprofits, tribes, and state and local governments to design trails and parks, conserve and improve access to rivers, protect special places, and create recreation opportunities.

https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm

FHWA Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) provides funds to communities to support a wide variety of trail activities and related facilities, as well as environmental education and safety programs. The program is administered by the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation in the Agency of Natural Resources.

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/index.cfm

Highway Safety Grants (HSG)

Federal Highway Safety Grants (HSG) are managed by VTrans. They are available to support countermeasure projects to create safer roads for all users. Improvements must be part of the Highway Safety Plan and could include roadway or intersection projects.

http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&rgn=div5&view=text&node=23:1.0.2.13.1&idno=23

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is a competitive grant program administered by VTrans that provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility. These funds will cover a maximum of 80% of the project with the remaining portions most likely coming from the project-sponsoring organization. The maximum size of a grant under this program is currently $300,000.

VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program (BPP)

The Vermont Bicycle and Pedestrian Program (BPP) provides federal funds managed by VTrans, to cover specific bicycle and pedestrian improvement projects and are provided via a competitive grant program.

Vermont Community Development Program (CDBG)*

Accessibility Modification Grants – Federal grants to bring existing municipal buildings and non-school libraries into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Implementation Grants – Federal grants for economic development, housing, public facilities, and public services that will benefit low/moderate income individuals, eliminate slums or blight, or address an urgent need.

Planning Grants – Federal grants for community development planning, downtown planning studies, and project development to benefit people with low to moderate incomes and/or eliminate "slums and blight." Range: $30,000–$1,000,000

Eligibility: Municipalities and/or municipalities on behalf of organizations and private owners

Deadline: Open application with funding decisions made throughout the year.

Contact: Josh Hanford, (802) 595-1385, josh.hanford@vermont.gov.

http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/funding/vcdp

State Grants and Programs

Vermont Community and Urban Forestry Council Grants (Caring for Canopies Grants, CCG)

These Caring for Canopies Grants (CCG) are awarded to municipalities to aid in taking the necessary actions to developing and sustaining a community-wide tree program, including tree plantings, inventories, maintenance, and planning. The grants range in size from $500 to $5,000 and require a 50% match.

http://fpr.vermont.gov/forest/community_forests/community_canopy_grants

Municipal Planning Grant Program (MPG)

The Municipal Planning Grants (MPG) are Vermont State grants for a wide range of municipal planning projects including municipal land use plans, zoning and subdivision bylaws, designated downtown, village and neighborhood planning. The range of the grants is from $2,500 to $20,000. Municipalities with adopted plans confirmed by their regional planning commission are eligible for these grants.

Regional Economic Development Grant Program (REDG)

The Vermont Regional Development Grant Program (REDG) is a program that provides matching state grants to stimulate the creation and development or retention of economic development of individual or regional Vermont communities. The grants range from $1,000 to $25,000 and are available to Vermont municipalities and non-profit organizations.

http://bgs.vermont.gov/formsandpublications

Recreational Facilities Grants Program (RFG)

The Recreational Facilities Grants (RFG) program provides matching state grants for capital costs associated with the development and creation of community recreational opportunities.

http://bgs.vermont.gov/home

Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI)

VTrans administers the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI), which distributes funding to regional planning commissions to undertake transportation planning work in their regions.

Cultural Facilities Grant Program (CFG)

The Cultural Facilities Grants (CFG) are matching state grants to improve community facilities used to provide cultural activities to the public to enhance or expand the capacity of an existing building to provide cultural programming. Grants can be from $1,000 to $30,000 and are given to municipalities and non-profit organizations.

http://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants-and-services/organizations/cultural-facilities

ACCD State Historic Preservation Grants (SHPG)

State 50:50 matching grants for the repair and restoration of historic buildings listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in Vermont.

http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/preservation/grants/historic_preservation

ACCD Downtown and Village Center Tax Credits (VCTC)

State income tax credits for projects that enhance historic commercial buildings.

http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/funding/downtown_village_tax_credit

State Organizations

Vermont Community Foundation (VCF)

A variety of grants are available to support projects to improve environmental sustainability, cultural heritage, social justice, historic preservation, and vitality of Vermont communities.

http://www.vermontcf.org/Nonprofits/AvailableGrants.aspx

VHCB Local Conservation Projects (VHCP)

Local conservation projects for agricultural and recreational land, town parks and forests, swimming holes, greenways, and buildings for public use.

http://www.vhcb.org/local-conservation.html

Lintilhac Foundation (LF)

Grants available for the purpose of land use and environmental equity, especially for recreational access to lands and integrative land use planning.

http://lintilhacfoundation.org/guidelines.html

Vermont Arts Council Animating Infrastructure Grant (AIG)

The Animating Infrastructure Grant (AIG) funds projects that integrate public art into existing or proposed infrastructure improvements, which could include buildings, recreational paths, parks, bridges, small-scale renewable energy projects, and water treatment facilities.

http://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants-and-services/organizations/animating-infrastructure

Vermont Arts Council Cultural Facilities Grant (VACCFG)

The Cultural Facilities Grant (VACCFG) funds projects that work to enhance, create, or expand the capacity of an existing building to provide cultural activities for the public.

http://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants-and-services/organizations/cultural-facilities

Ben & Jerry's Foundation

Funds community programs in Vermont, including social service organizations, cultural, recreational, or arts programs, and community celebrations.

http://benandjerrysfoundation.org/vermont-community-action-teams.html

Green Mountain Coffee Roasters

Community sponsorships fund projects that focus on the betterment of communities. Emphasis on Washington and Chittenden Counties.

http://www.keuriggreenmountain.com/en/Sustainability/ThrivingPeopleandCommunities/ThrivingCommunities/CommunitySponsorships.aspx

National Organizations

People For Bikes Community Fund

The People For Bikes Community Grant Program (PBCG) provides funding for important and influential projects that leverage federal funding and build momentum for bicycling in communities across the U.S. These projects include bike paths and rail trails, as well as mountain bike trails, bike parks, BMX facilities, and large-scale bicycle advocacy initiatives.

http://www.peopleforbikes.org/pages/community-grants

Bell Built Grants

Bell Helmets offers a $100,000 technical assistance grant (BHG) to fund a gravity mountain bike trail built by IMBA Trail Solutions. One grant is available for a gravity trail for black diamond/double black diamond level riding. The trail will feature a 300-foot minimum drop and include steep sections, jumps, rollers, and berms. It will be 100% optimized for mountain bikes and advanced riders. It may feature alternate lines to encourage rider progression.

https://www.imba.com/grants/bell-built

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grants

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) provides funds for demonstration projects that provide information and demonstrations on creating more healthy communities. They have in the past used this funding to assist in the creation of community walking and bicycling facilities.

Trails Connecting People with Nature: A program of the Sierra Club's Nearby Nature Initiative

In collaboration with Sierra Club Outdoors, Sierra Club's Nearby Nature Initiative (NNI) broadens the conservation movement by protecting and establishing close-to-home natural spaces to ensure that access to the outdoors is increasingly equitable and available to all communities. Sierra Club Outdoors connects people to nature for the benefit of both, hosting over 265,000 people per year in the outdoors and inspiring millions more. The Sierra Club's Trails program aims to create, restore, and maintain trails in urban areas with limited access to nature and in more remote areas on public lands, like the Green Mountain National Forest. The Sierra Club Foundation will award one-year Trails project grants ranging from $5,000 to $20,000 towards trail creation or maintenance project proposals that engage new leaders and provide opportunities for communities to connect with nature.

https://content.sierraclub.org/ourwildamerica/sites/content.sierraclub.org.ourwildamerica/files/RFP_7-15_fill-outable.pdf

Non-Grant Funding Sources

Development Impact Fees (DIF)

A development Impact fee (DIF) is an assessment on development used to pay for its proportionate share of the impacts to public facilities. Some communities assign a standard dollar figure to the public sites, some use a park, pedestrian improvements, trails and open space development impact fee, some give the developer an opportunity to arrive at a fee value based on projected impact, while others allow for the dedication of parkland, or fee-in-lieu, in place of the impact fee. A full spectrum of leisure services which contain costs for recreation centers, trails and open space, in addition to parks, has been included in some communities' development impact fees. Some of these development impact fees could be contributed to a fund to support enhanced community and pedestrian accommodations.

Bond Issues

Bond (B) issues by the Towns may provide important opportunities to leverage other funds, such as required match amounts for federal or state grant programs, and regional bonds may be needed for larger scale projects.

Local Funds

Local Funds (LF) are sources of funding that are provided by local governments through local budgets or funds other than bonds. Capital Improvement Plans (CIP) can be leveraged to help advance specific initiatives.

The most recent Town of Chester CIP identified many projects for funding including work at the Academy building, recreation and sidewalk upgrades. Aligning the long-term capital program with initiatives outlined in this master plan should be a priority, particularly for the key initiatives that have been identified.

Private Donors & Fund Raising

Funds can be provided by private donors or through special fund-raising efforts (PDFR), which can supplement or substitute for local funds. In many communities, the design of specific improvements is often crafted to encourage private donations; donor benches, bricks, trees. The use of private funding is often less constrained and restricted and opens up new or expansive opportunities for creativity in design outcome. Fundraising efforts can be very time consuming and require reaching out broadly to the community, business interests and others.

The use of crowd-sourcing sites such as Kickstarter can make the process of seeking input or funding easier in many ways. The web-based platforms allow communities to broadcast ideas widely, often attracting the interests of people who might never have visited otherwise. Keys to this process include making a compelling case about the reasons for the project, offering up some definitive value to the donor (i.e., a memorial brick, commemorative map, etc.) and communicating how the project supports the broader vision for the area. This last point is important as it is often appropriate to take big ideas and break them down in crowdfunding—smaller projects can be done more quickly and link together to provide bigger outcomes.

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Signage and wayfinding development

- A Wayfinding Master Plan is scheduled to be developed in 2017/2018 to guide the placement of signs, both directional and informational
- The town has contracted a local architect to design the signage prototypes

Zoning Audit to guide town planning

- A review of the town's zoning foundation will be reviewed in comparison to the town's future goals and modern day practices
- Further educational opportunities will be provided to town boards
- Pending the zoning audit, a thorough re-writing of the town's zoning bylaws will occur

Main Street Promenade, Brookside Trail and Central School Improvements

- Widen sidewalk in front of Brookside Cemetery to create a gathering space for community use
- Create in town walking trail behind the Brookside Cemetery with a bridge access over the river
- Continue improvements to the Central School/Academy Building with a goal of opening the building to the public as a museum/information/art display space.

Improve green area at Town Hall location, improve connections with the Train Depot

- This piggy backs onto the Depot Street sidewalk initiative to provide better walkability
- The triangle in front of town hall will be enhanced to include improved parking and an enhanced green space
- Informational signage related to Chester's village will be installed
- Communication will take place with the Vermont Rail to provide the tourist trains with an enhanced passenger experience, which will benefit both the rail and the Town of Chester

Depot Street improvements

- The sidewalk would be widened with the addition of a green strip and curbing.
- Installation of Pedestrian Scale lighting would be installed in the green strip
- Improved wayfinding communication at the infamous "triangle"
- Complete gaps in the existing sidewalk from the beginning of Depot Street all the way to Town Hall

Create parklets, i.e. School Street, Encouraging river access, create gathering spaces for better connections

- Create small parklet areas around town to be used as gathering spaces with river access
- Areas under consideration include; end of School Street, Brookside Cemetery, near Gristmill on Route 103, Kingsbury Road and on Route 11 West

THE LOOP
MEADOW RD
ORCUTT DR
LOVERS LANE BROOK
TREE FARM
PROPOSED BROOKSIDE TRAILS
CHURCH ST
SENIOR CIR
MAIN ST
11
BROOKSIDE CEMETERY
THE COMMON
THE GREEN
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
COBLEIGH ST
COBLEIGH FIELDS
WILLIAMS RIVER MIDDLE BRANCH
PLEASANT VIEW CEMETERY
SCHOOL ST
CANAL ST
WHITING LIBRARY
CANAL STREET WELL
SCULLIN ST
WALDO RD
GRAFTON RD
DODGE RD
RIVER ST
103
MAPLE ST
MAIN ST
BARRE RIDGE RD
TOWN HALL
GRAIN STORE RD
DEPOT
AVON RD
TOWN GARAGE RD
FIRST AVE
TOWN GARAGE, FIRE DEPARTMENT, AMBULANCE
HAMMOND PARK
DEPOT ST
WILLIAMS RIVER

Legend

- Village Boundary
- Parcel Boundary
- Conservation Area
- Walking Route (Existing)
- Proposed Trails
- Key Wayfinding

Figure 21: EXPLORING THE VISION | KEY INITIATIVES

N
0 100 200 400 Feet

CHESTER VILLAGE CENTER MASTER PLAN
Implementation Matrix - Moving the Vision Forward | PAGE 1

OBJECTIVE		INITIATIVE	KEY INITIATIVE?	DESCRIPTION	TYPE	COMMUNITY PARTNERS	SUPPORT OR RESOURCE PARTNERS	QUANTITY	TIME LINE OR PRIORITY	GENERAL DESCRIPTION	IMPORTANT IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES / STRATEGIES	PLAN REFERENCES	SUPPORTING THE VISION - THEMATIC ELEMENTS: ARTS	BUSINESS AND TOURISM	HISTORIC RESOURCES AND CULTURE	LAND USE AND DESIGN	RECREATION	TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY	COST RANGE	GRANT ALIGNMENT See Chapter 7	CASE STUDY REFERENCE
1	BRINGING PEOPLE TO MAIN STREET	A	✓	MAIN STREET PROMENADE	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE, HISTORIC SOCIETY	VTRANS, ACCD, SWCRPC	1350 feet + Street furniture, signage and wayfinding elements	MID-TERM	Widening of approximately 1350 lineal feet of existing concrete sidewalk on the north side of Main Street to eight (8) feet. This would allow this new sidepath to support shared use between pedestrians and bicyclists seeking to avoid the on-street parking along Main Street. Based on existing right-of-way information, widening of the sidewalk would not likely require additional land. The design should carefully consider existing and mature trees along Main Street and work to avoid any negative impact to them as they provide exceptional character and charm. To enhance the value of this walkway as a welcome point into Chester Village, the concept is to promote the sidepath as a "promenade"; an environment not simply functioning as a conveyance but where gathering, interacting and engaging with friends and neighbors is encouraged. It is a place where residents come to worship and commune with each other. In addition to the new public space that widening the walkway provides, the concept includes new street furniture (benches, trash cans, recycling stations) and signage (wayfinding, informational or interpretive elements). Furniture supports "lingering" and places for people to connect. Signage can help communicate where important community assets are location or highlight significant historic structures and help Chester tell its story. Opportunities to relocate the monuments on the Green should also be explored as part of this effort. They could be relocated near the Hearse House and Tomb along with other monuments already there.	Existing ROW appears to afford sufficient space to accommodate widening of path May require private land ROW for construction and/or placement of historic "information" signs or bollards Wayfinding along the promenade should communicate important historic resources and broader community assets Avoidance of impacts to existing and established trees within the project area	STUDY AREA 13	Provides an opportunity to incorporate community art along promenade and/or in the design of specific elements such as bollards. Supports outdoor space for arts oriented events - chalkwalks, etc.	Supports local historic walking tours Provides widened public space in support of events such as Chester on the Green Promotes business connectivity and provides additional space for seasonal events, outdoor activities, and vending	Support an opportunity for interpretive walking tour and communication of community history, historic resources and culture Provides a venue for historic or cultural events	Encourages pedestrian accessibility to existing civic and religious uses (Brookside Cemetery, Churches) Support opportunities to elevate pedestrian experience through streetscape improvements	Promotes recreational bicycle and pedestrian access along Main Street to Elementary School and Brookfield Cemetery + New Trails Provides connections to Brookside Trails and associated outdoor spaces	Promotes better bicycle accommodation along Main Street Supports improved pedestrian mobility	$$$$	TA, BPP, HSG, PBCG	CASE STUDY #1
		B	✓	BROOKSIDE TRAILS	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE, HISTORIC SOCIETY	ACCD, NPS	About 3800 feet of new trails and a pedestrian bridge. New wayfinding and furniture	NEAR-TERM	Development of a new recreation trail system within town-owned lands north of the existing Brookside Cemetery. These improvements would also include the installation of a new bridge linking the cemetery lands to the "Tree Farm" lands owned by the Town of Chester. New signage and benches would also be included.	Address the crossing of the brook will require some detailed evaluation of top-of-banks and potential environmental impacts	STUDY AREA 13	Integrated into Main Street Promenade and/or Central School projects to connect to arts centers (See Objective 6) Art walks could be organized along the trails	Proximal to village center and existing tourism accommodations Promotes increased length of stay in the community which supports increased spending in Chester businesses	Supports public access to historic cemetery	Encourages pedestrian accessibility to existing civic and religious uses (Brookside Cemetery, Churches)	Promotes walking in the community and access to the outdoors in close proximity to village center	Supports community mobility	$$	LWCF, RTP, RTC, RFG, LF, NNI, VHCB	
		C	✓	CENTRAL SCHOOL (ACADEMY BUILDING) AND COURTYARD	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE, HISTORIC SOCIETY		Improvement to Building and outdoor courtyard (about 300 sf)	ON-GOING	The rehabilitation of the Central School (Academy) building along Main Street adjacent to the Brookside Cemetery to address existing building issues. Improvements to encourage greater public accessibility to the facility and an expansion of uses including a community visitors center, public restrooms, art gallery and a continuation of the history museum. Redevelop the outdoor spaces adjacent to the structure to create a more formal courtyard, connect with future Brookside Cemetery trails and the promenade. Incorporation of outdoor seating, planters and landscape treatments and appropriate wayfinding signage.	Need an architectural assessment of the structure and surrounding to evaluate options		Continues opportunity for arts in public spaces (courtyard) and/or museum.	Support local historic tourism opportunities Creates new destination in Chester that lengthens visitor stays and supports visitor spending in local businesses	Promotes historic resources and culture	Encourages pedestrian accessibility to existing civic and religious uses (Brookside Cemetery, Churches)	Promotes access to the outdoors in close proximity to village center Encourages linkages for recreational use	Promotes use of maps, wayfinding, transportation system, and other visitor information	$$$$	CFG, SHPG, VCTC, VACCFG	CASE STUDY #1
		D		MAIN STREET BIKE LANES	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE, HISTORIC, SCHOOL	VTRANS, LOCAL MOTION, SWCRPC	2000 Feet	MID-TERM	Addition of striped four (5') wide bike lanes along Main Street from intersection of Depot/Main to Church Street. Inclusion of new MUTCD signage indicating bike lanes. Transitional markings from existing shoulder into bike lanes	Can be started using "Tactical Urbanism" - painting markings on the side of the road and having a Bike Chester day. Work with Local Motion.	STUDY AREA 13	N/A	Support visitor and tourism use of Main Street Can support inclusion of Village on travel guides and marketing for bicycle tours	Promotes access to historic resources and culture	Encourages pedestrian accessibility to existing civic and religious uses (Brookside Cemetery, Churches)	Promotes access to the outdoors in close proximity to village center	Supports community mobility	$	TA, BPP, HSG, PBCG	CASE STUDY #2
		E		MAIN STREET CROSSINGS	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE, HISTORIC, SCHOOL	VTRANS, SWCRPC	Up to 4 Crossings	MID-TERM	Provide additional crossing points along Main Street to provide better access to the courtyard. Crossings may include temporary (i.e. seasonal) bulbouts that should consider drainage and bike lane locations.	Requires additional scoping and coordination with Vtrans.		Supports movement of people within Main Street. Public Art can be a part of bulbouts and/or pedestrian spaces	Promotes walkability within the Village Core - supporting tourism and visitor movement across Main Street	Promotes access to historic resources and culture	Encourages nighttime pedestrian accessibility to existing civic and religious uses	Promotes access to the outdoors in close proximity to village center	Supports community mobility	$$	TA, BPP, HSG	CASE STUDY #2
		F		MAIN STREET UTILITY CONSOLIDATION AND/OR RELOCATION	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE, HISTORIC	VTRANS, GMP, FAIRPOINT	Various Lines and Poles	LONG-TERM	Utility lines should be consolidated, cleaned up and possibly removed to remove visual clutter. Green Mountain Power, VTel and Comcast should be engaged to discuss options available for the lines along Main Street.	Requires process to determine engineering and/or design issues	STUDY AREA 13	N/A	Promotes a better streetscape aesthetic that might enliven appeal to visitors	Enhances the qualities of the historic district	De-clutters the public realm and promotes unencumbered sightlines	N/A	N/A	$-$$$$	CDBG, REDG, VCF	CASE STUDY #2, #3
		G		MAIN STREET PEDESTRIAN LIGHTS	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE, HISTORIC	VTRANS, GMP	60 Lights - including along Common Street / Green	MID-TERM	New "period" style pedestrian fixtures along portions of Main Street.	Need a more detailed lighting assessment to determine capacities and design objectives	STUDY AREA 13	Design of light fixtures and lighting of areas can support the community's arts identity	Promotes a better streetscape aesthetic that might enliven appeal to visitors. Encourages nighttime use of the area	Enhances the qualities of the historic district	Encourages nighttime pedestrian accessibility to existing civic and religious uses	Promotes more recreation on The Green with nighttime activity	Supports community mobility	$$$	TA, BPP, CDBG, CCG	CASE STUDY #2

KEY INITIATIVE

TIME LINE		
	IMMEDIATE	Within Next 12 months
	NEAR TERM	Between 12 months and 2 years
	MID-TERM	Between 2 years and 10 years
	LONG-TERM	Beyond 10 years

COST RANGE		
	$	Low Cost (Between 0 - $15K)
	$$	Moderate Cost (between $15 - $100K)
	$$$	High Cost (Between $100 - $350 K)
	$$$$	Very High Cost (Greater than $350K)

CHESTER VILLAGE CENTER MASTER PLAN
Implementation Matrix - Moving the Vision Forward | PAGE 2

OBJECTIVE		INITIATIVE	KEY INITIATIVE?	DESCRIPTION	TYPE	COMMUNITY PARTNERS	SUPPORT OR RESOURCE PARTNERS	QUANTITY	TIME LINE OR PRIORITY	GENERAL DESCRIPTION	IMPORTANT IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES / STRATEGIES	PLAN REFERENCES	SUPPORTING THE VISION - THEMATIC ELEMENTS						COST RANGE	GRANT ALIGNMENT See Chapter 7	CASE STUDY REFERENCE
													ARTS	BUSINESS AND TOURISM	HISTORIC RESOURCES AND CULTURE	LAND USE AND DESIGN	RECREATION	TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY			
2	CONNECTING DEPOT TO MAIN	A	✓	DEPOT STREET SIDEWALK	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE	VTRANS, SWCRPC	3500 Feet	NEAR-TERM	Upgrades (new walks and curbing) along Depot Street (west side) predominately within existing ROW. This should be a six (6) foot wide sidewalk.	Expanding the sidewalk along Depot Street (west side) to be more inviting and supporting greater connectivity	STUDY AREA 18, 20	N/A	Promotes a better streetscape aesthetic that might enliven appeal to visitors	N/A	Promotes interest in Chester Depot area and connection to Village Core	Promotes access to the outdoors in close proximity to village center	Supports community mobility	$$$	TA, BPP, HSG	CASE STUDY #2
		B	✓	DEPOT STREET RETAINING WALL	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE, HISTORIC SOCIETY	VTRANS, SWCRPC	100 Feet of Wall	MID-TERM	As part of Initiative 2-A (above), build an approximately 100 foot retaining wall along the curve of 103 as it intersects with Depot Street to "open up" views into the Village Core and provide greater space for pedestrian improvements. The retaining wall on Depot Street at Maple should reflect the historic character of the Village.	Requires additional scoping, and private land right-of-way. Detailed engineering will be needed to validate wall design.	STUDY AREA 20	Supports local arts and arts programming	Promotes a better streetscape aesthetic that might enliven appeal to visitors	Enhances the qualities of the historic district	Promotes interest in Chester Depot area and connection to Village Core Promotes nighttime safety and contributes to sense of security	Promotes more recreation with nighttime activity	Supports community mobility	$$	STP, RD, HSG, VCF	
		C	✓	DEPOT STREET PEDESTRIAN LIGHTS	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE	VTRANS	29 Lights	MID-TERM	New lighting along the western side of Depot Street in a style consistent with Main Street Improvements	Need a more detailed lighting assessment to determine capacities and design objectives	STUDY AREA 18, 20	N/A	Promotes a better streetscape aesthetic that might enliven appeal to visitors	Enhances the qualities of the historic district		N/A	Supports community mobility	$$	TA, BPP, CDBG, CCG	CASE STUDY #2
		D	✓	DEPOT STREET / MAPLE STREET INTERSECTION	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE	VTRANS, SWCRPC	20 SF of Improvements	MID-TERM	Improved "Landscape" at intersection	Requires additional scoping, and private land right-of-way. Detailed engineering will be needed to address site distances and road geometric conditions.	STUDY AREA 20	Supports local arts and arts programming	Supports local tourism and extends experience Makes area more attractive and appealing to visitors	Enhances the qualities of the historic district	Promotes interest in Chester Depot area and connection to Village Core	N/A	N/A	$$	TA, CDBG, CCG, AIG	CASE STUDY #2
		E	✓	CHESTER DEPOT PLAZA	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE, HISTORIC	VTRANS, GREEN MOUNTAIN RAILROAD	300 SF of Plaza	MID-TERM	Plaza space at Chester Depot - Requires study of design options and coordination with Green Mountain Railroad. This project should also be coordinated with impovements to Town Hall (3A).	Coordination with Green Mountain Railroad	STUDY AREA 19	Supports local arts and arts programming	Supports local tourism and extends experience	Supports historic resource programming and events	Promotes interest in Chester Depot area and connection to Village Core	Promotes access to the outdoors in close proximity to village center	N/A	$$-$$$	TA, CDBG, AIG	CASE STUDY #2, #3
		F	✓	THE DEPOT AS A NODE	COMMUNITY BUILDING	TOWN, GREEN MOUNTAIN RAILROAD		N/A	MID-TERM	Collaborate with Green Mountain RR to develop mutually beneficial programs to extend and enhance Visitor's experience and encourage active use of the train station.	Coordination with Green Mountain Railroad	STUDY AREA 19	Supports local arts and arts programming	Supports local economic development objectives Promotes longer stays in the community and supports additional visitor spending	Supports historic resource programming and events	Promotes interest in Chester Depot area and connection to Village Core	Creates opportunities for new recreational activities	N/A	$	CFG, SHPG, VCTC, VACCFG	
3	ENLIVENING TOWN HALL	A	✓	TOWN HALL PARK STREETSCAPE	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE		200 feet of Sidwalks	NEAR-TERM	New Sidewalks, benches and other improvements at the Park. Upgrade of lighting to new "standard"	Create a more attractive outdoor environment at Town Hall Park and better define the parking for Town Hall.	STUDY AREA 19	Supports local arts and arts programming	Makes area more attractive and appealing to visitors	Supports historic resource programming and events	Enhances civic space within the community and supports community interaction Can provide an incubator for good design ideas that can be applied elsewhere in the Village Center	Promotes access to the outdoors in close proximity to village center	Supports community mobility	$$	TA, BPP, CDBG, CCG, LWCF, RFG	CASE STUDY #2, #3, #4
4	CONNECTING TO THE RIVER	A		SCHOOL STREET SIDEWALK	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE	VTRANS, SWCRPC	450 Feet	MID-TERM	Upgrade of walks along School Street. Requires additional scoping to determine private land right-of-way issues. New curbing would require addressing stormwater and/or sheet flow.	Determining exact extent of public right-of-way	STUDY AREA 14	Supports local arts and arts programming	Supports local economic development objectives	Supports historic resource programming and events	Encourages connection between Village Core uses and broader, more rural recreational lands	Promotes access from Village Core to rural areas	Supports community mobility	$$	TA, BPP, CCG	
		B	✓	SCHOOL STREET PARKLET	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE		500 SF of Parklet	NEAR-TERM	Park space within public-right-of-way at end of School Street	Extent of existing right-of-way Private land right-of-way Scoping and Costing	STUDY AREA 14	Supports local arts and arts programming	Supports local economic development objectives Promotes longer stays in the community and supports additional visitor spending	Creates opportunity to connect community history and culture to the river	Uses town-owned land to be benefit of locals and visitors	Promotes access to the outdoor. Provides linkage from Village Core to other side of river and future recreation	N/A	$$	LWCF, CCG, VHCB, AIG, RFG	CASE STUDY #2, #3, #4
		C	✓	DEVELOP NEW PARKS AT MCNALLY PROPERTY (RIVERFRONT), GRIST MILL (ON ROUTE 103), AND RAINBOW ROCK	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN		TBD	NEAR-TERM	Use of existing town-owned land for 3 small parkS. The McNally Property Park could connect people to the river, the Grist Mill Park would promote this historic resoruce, and the Rainbow Rock Park would provide access to a community swimming hole.	Evaluate access, security and uses		Supports local arts and arts programming	Promotes longer stays in the community and supports additional visitor spending	Communicate historic resources of the area Creates opportunity to connect community history and culture to the river	Uses town-owned land to be benefit of locals and visitors	Promotes recreational access to the River and public enjoyment of the outdoors.	N/A	$ - $$	LWCF, CCG, VHCB, AIG, RFG	

KEY INITIATIVE

TIME LINE		
	IMMEDIATE	Within Next 12 months
	NEAR TERM	Between 12 months and 2 years
	MID-TERM	Between 2 years and 10 years
	LONG-TERM	Beyond 10 years

COST RANGE		
	$	Low Cost (Between 0 - $15K)
	$$	Moderate Cost (between $15 - $100K)
	$$$	High Cost (Between $100 - $350 K)
	$$$$	Very High Cost (Greater than $350K)

CHESTER VILLAGE CENTER MASTER PLAN
Implementation Matrix - Moving the Vision Forward | PAGE 3

OBJECTIVE		INITIATIVE	KEY INITIATIVE?	DESCRIPTION	TYPE	COMMUNITY PARTNERS	SUPPORT OR RESOURCE PARTNERS	QUANTITY	TIME LINE OR PRIORITY	GENERAL DESCRIPTION	IMPORTANT IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES / STRATEGIES	PLAN REFERENCES	SUPPORTING THE VISION - THEMATIC ELEMENTS: ARTS	BUSINESS AND TOURISM	HISTORIC RESOURCES AND CULTURE	LAND USE AND DESIGN	RECREATION	TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY	COST RANGE	GRANT ALIGNMENT See Chapter 7	CASE STUDY REFERENCE
5	SUPPORTING BUSINESS ACTIVITY ON COMMON STREET	A		THE GREEN IMPROVEMENTS	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE, HISTORIC	VTRANS, ACCD, SWCRPC	20,000 SF of Park 484 Feet of Sidewalk	LONG-TERM	Improvements to the park including new walkway along the parking edge, new curbing, update of benches and lighting to consistent with "standard", new wayfinding signage, bicycle facilities. New water fountains with water filling station	Extent of existing right-of-way Private land right-of-way Scoping and Costing	STUDY AREA 15	Supports local arts and arts programming	Enhances experience for local businesses, improves appearance and connections to surrounding areas	Communicate historic resources of the area	Enhances and elevates design at Village Core	Promotes public access to the Green as a place for passive recreation and enjoyment	Encourages pedestrian mobility	$$$	LWCF, CCG, VHCB, AIG, RFG	CASE STUDY 4
		B		COMMON STREET PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE, HISTORIC	VTRANS, SWCRPC	642 feet of Walks and plaza	LONG-TERM	Upgrade of sidewalks along Common Street adjacent to existing building. Will require private land-right-of-way and/or addressing of utilities. Snow storage should be addressed in design process.	Extent of existing right-of-way Private land right-of-way stormwater and utilities issues	STUDY AREA 15	Supports local arts and arts programming	Enhances experience for local businesses, improves appearance and connections to surrounding areas	Communicate historic resources of the area	Enhances and elevates design at Village Core	Promotes public access to the Green as a place for passive recreation and enjoyment	Encourages pedestrian mobility	$$$	TA, BPP, CDBG, CCG, LWCF, RFG	CASE STUDY #2
		C		PARKING AT COBLIEGH FIELDS	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT		VTRANS	Parking Lot at Cobleigh Fields of 30 + /- spaces	NEAR TO MID-TERM	Establish new parking lot with EV charging station at former ice rink at Cobliegh Fields	Need to assure appropriate signage on Main Street to direct cars to parking lot Can consider adding transit stop to enhance its regional orientation		N/A	Provides additional public parking in support of local businesses and for events	N/A	Promotes reuse of public land in support of local business, events and activities	N/A	Encourages pedestrian mobility Supports electric vehicles	$$	CDBG, REDG, VCF	
		D		ADDITIONAL PARKING FOR COMMON STREET	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	PRIVATE SECTOR	TOWN	New Parking Lot of 20 +/- Spaces	MID-TERM	Create new parking area off of Common Street businesses and residences to serve tenants and/or patrons to expand access to parking. Parking may be able to be created at Canal Street, at least for employees.	Private land issues and coordination on parking. Access and/or parking agreement might be needed. Zoning changes to address parking might be needed.		Supports local arts and arts programming	Supports additional parking in support of local businesses	N/A	Supports local business activities	N/A	Encourages efficient parking and better access to parking areas	$	CDBG, REDG, VCF	
6	EXPRESSING COMMUNITY IDENTITY THROUGH SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING	A		HISTORIC MARKERS	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN		N/A	MID-TERM	Historic markers which are consistent with the proposed wayfinding signage (6C) to identify and explain historic architecture and monuments throughout the Village.	Coordinate placement with private interest Identify any ROW issues	STUDY AREA 13	Assure local art is approached in development of plans	Encourage interaction with local businesses in process Promote history of community to interested visitors	Thoughtful consideration of historic resources as part of the process	Align design throughout the Village Center	N/A	N/A	$$	CFG, VCTC, AIG, VACFG, BJF	CASE STUDY #1, #5, #6
		B	✓	SIGNAGE AND IDENTITY CONCEPTS	COMMUNITY BUILDING	TOWN	CONSULTANT, VTRANS	N/A	IMMEDIATE	Prepare "concept" signage elements to help explore the basis for community identity, form and cost for new arrival (Gateway) and supportive signage. Develop signs that are functional, visible, easy to read and built to last. Assure signage directs people to the Green.	Work with local consultant to explore ideas and options. Review and consider MUTCD requirements for VTRANS		Evoke local arts in design	Understand business needs in new signage	Consider historic character as part of new signage design	Support a design that enhances cohesion within the Village Center	N/A	Consult with Vtrans for signage related to direction and/or state highway functions	$	STPG, TA, RD, REDG	CASE STUDY #5
		C	✓	WAYFINDING MASTER PLAN	COMMUNITY BUILDING	TOWN	CONSULTANT	N/A	ON-GOING	Develop a more formal "master plan" to address all wayfinding elements	Integrate with design concepts and signage policies. Review and consider MUTCD requirements for VTRANS		Reflect arts identity of Town	Understand business needs in new signage ordinances to assure compliance and conformity	Consider historic character as part of new signage requirements	Align design throughout the Village Center	N/A	Consult with Vtrans for signage related to direction and/or state highway functions	$$	STPG, TA, RD, REDG	CASE STUDY #5
		D		SIGN STANDARDS	COMMUNITY BUILDING	TOWN	RPC, VTRANS	N/A	NEAR-TERM	Review existing signage ordinance and align with result of conceptual and master planning work for wayfinding system	Review existing ordinances to assure they support a more integrated approach to the wayfinding system		Reflect arts identity of Town	Understand business needs in new signage ordinances to assure compliance and conformity	Consider historic character as part of new signage requirements	Align design throughout the Village Center	N/A	Consult with Vtrans for signage related to direction and/or state highway functions	$	STPG, TA, RD, REDG	
		E		GATEWAY SIGNAGE	PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT	TOWN	CONSULTANT, VTRANS	Entry Points and Consistent with Wayfinding Master Plan (6C)	MID-TERM	Implement new Village Center gateway signage at locations determined from detailed study. Create prominent gateway (Welcome to Chester) signs for all entrances into Town.	Determine appropriate locations and address private land right-of-way issues	STUDY AREA 17	Assure local art is approached in development of plans	Encourage interaction with local businesses in process	Thoughtful consideration of historic resources as part of the process	Align design throughout the Village Center	N/A	Consult with Vtrans for signage related to direction and/or state highway functions	$$	STPG, TA, RD, REDG	CASE STUDY #5

KEY INITIATIVE

TIME LINE	
IMMEDIATE	Within Next 12 months
NEAR TERM	Between 12 months and 2 years
MID-TERM	Between 2 years and 10 years
LONG-TERM	Beyond 10 years

COST RANGE	
$	Low Cost (Between 0 - $15K)
$$	Moderate Cost (between $15 - $100K)
$$$	High Cost (Between $100 - $350 K)
$$$$	Very High Cost (Greater than $350K)

CHESTER VILLAGE CENTER MASTER PLAN

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OBJECTIVE		INITIATIVE	KEY INITIATIVE?	DESCRIPTION	TYPE	COMMUNITY PARTNERS	SUPPORT OR RESOURCE PARTNERS	QUANTITY	TIME LINE OR PRIORITY	GENERAL DESCRIPTION	IMPORTANT IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES / STRATEGIES	PLAN REFERENCES	SUPPORTING THE VISION - THEMATIC ELEMENTS						COST RANGE	GRANT ALIGNMENT See Chapter 7	CASE STUDY REFERENCE
													ARTS	BUSINESS AND TOURISM	HISTORIC RESOURCES AND CULTURE	LAND USE AND DESIGN	RECREATION	TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY			
7	SUPPORTING GOOD OUTCOMES	A		REVIVE THE ARTISTS GUILD	COMMUNITY BUILDING	TOWN, LOCAL ARTISTS	PRIVATE SECTOR	N/A	NEAR-TERM	Provide space at the Central School building (#1C) , Promote and expand the offerings of art (both visual and performance) for enjoyment and profit.	Address current uses and assure continuity		Promotes and supports arts throughout the community	Aligns artists and business interests Adds entertainment destinations that support local retail and restaurant businesses	Embraces historic resources as part; both physical and as a place for performance	Promotes land use and design decisions that encourage public art and make it visible	Supports art in recreation (art walks, etc.)	N/A	$	CFG, VACFG, AIG, VCF, REDG	CASE STUDY #1
		B		PRESERVE NATURAL SETTING	COMMUNITY BUILDING	TOWN, OPEN SPACE		N/A	NEAR-TERM	Preserve the natural setting and green space within the Village Center wherever possible	Assure current inventory of natural areas and green spaces		N/A	Contributes to the Town's rural character and identity as a "green," environmentally-friendly community	Align objectives for use of green space with historic qualities and/or values	Address as part of zoning bylaws and town plan update process (See 7D)	Align open space policies with recreation to support meaningful access and preservation of important areas	N/A	$	LWCF, RD, RFG, VHCB	
		C		TOWN BEAUTIFICATION	COMMUNITY BUILDING	TOWN, TOWNSCAPE	PRIVATE SECTOR	N/A	NEAR-TERM	Accelerate the planting of trees, shrubs and flowers throughout the Village. Provide a town-funded program to support beautification efforts of historic properties. Draft a guidance document for the award of these funds and present to the Selectboard.	Align objectives with other organization and private interests		Support arts installations as part of beautification	Seek input and contribution (adopt a park) from local businesses Makes Chester more attractive and appealing to visitors	Be considerate of local historic resources and landscape	Address private land uses and coordinate landscape design to enhance visual cohesion	Elevate outdoor spaces to promote recreational value	Support objectives for mobility enhancement and coordinate on new projects	$	CCG, LWCF, SHPG, VCTC	CASE STUDY #3, #6
		D	✓	AUTID AND UPDATE UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT BYLAWS	COMMUNITY BUILDING	TOWN	CONSULTANT, RPC	N/A	IMMEDIATE	Hire a consultancy to do a comprehensive review and audit of the UDB's. Educate members of the Planning Commission on modern land use policy and techniques. Develop a smoother and easier process for permitting. Consider housing policy within the context of this update to explore ways to promote new options within the Village Center (accessory dwelling units, caretaker units) that support the needs of locals including seniors and those with fixed incomes.	Coordinate actions with Town Plan update to align objectives for Village and Town		Address public arts in the development of standards	Seek input from Local Businesses on permitting issues; parking standards Promotes economic development through increased efficiency and efficacy of the permitting process and the development bylaws	Address historic resource use and preservation in the development of standards	Align land use objectives within the Village Center to be consistent with the Master Plan and Town Plan including housing needs.	Look to promote new linkages and connections in development for Recreational purposes	Support objectives for mobility enhancement within regulations	$	MPG, REDG	
		E		SUPPORTING EVENTS AND LOCAL BUSINESSES	COMMUNITY BUILDING	TOWN, ROTARY	PRIVATE SECTOR	N/A	NEAR-TERM	Build a working group of diverse community interests around "Events" and discuss the overall community calendar - coordinate events, cooperation on public communication and management. Development programs to support local businesses	Determining primary responsible party		Consider public arts in events - celebrate arts achievements	Work with local business to identify events. Advise and assist local businesses through counseling, mentoring, allocation of local, state and/or federal programs for tax credits Encourage public-private partnerships	Understand how historic resources relate to business use and support preservation and adaptive reuse (See 7F)	Build stronger relationship with local businesses and Regional Development Corporation. Align land use policies to support business enterprises (ag, arts, historic, etc.)	Promote recreation-oriented businesses or businesses that take advantage of recreational resources	Support mobility in support of community mobility and economic development	$	REDG, VCF, BJF	CASE STUDY #4
		F		SUPPORTING HISTORY	COMMUNITY BUILDING	TOWN, HISTORIC, TOWNSCAPE	PRIVATE SECTOR	N/A	NEAR-TERM	Encourage recognition of and support of historic resources in the Village Center. Provide a town-funded program to support historic rehabilitation.	Consistency in the process of supporting historic resources		Connect art and history and establish consistency in signage/identity	Promote local business and historic resource interactions, events and programs	N/A	Support the preservation of important historic resources and align land use and design standards with historic resource issues	N/A	N/A	$	SHPG, VCTC, CFG, VACFG	CASE STUDY #1, #6
		G		REDISCOVER CHESTER WORKING GROUP	COMMUNITY BUILDING	TOWN		N/A	IMMEDIATE	Continue to move elements of this plan forward through the Rediscovering Chester steering committee	Add new members if appropriate to address other perspectives or issues.		Support arts as a part of moving initiatives forward	Support local businesses Support and engage with local businesses to share resources and develop public-private partnerships	Support historic resources and culture	Support good land use objectives and design	Encourage and expand recreational opportunity	Support mobility in all forms	$	MPG, REDG	

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